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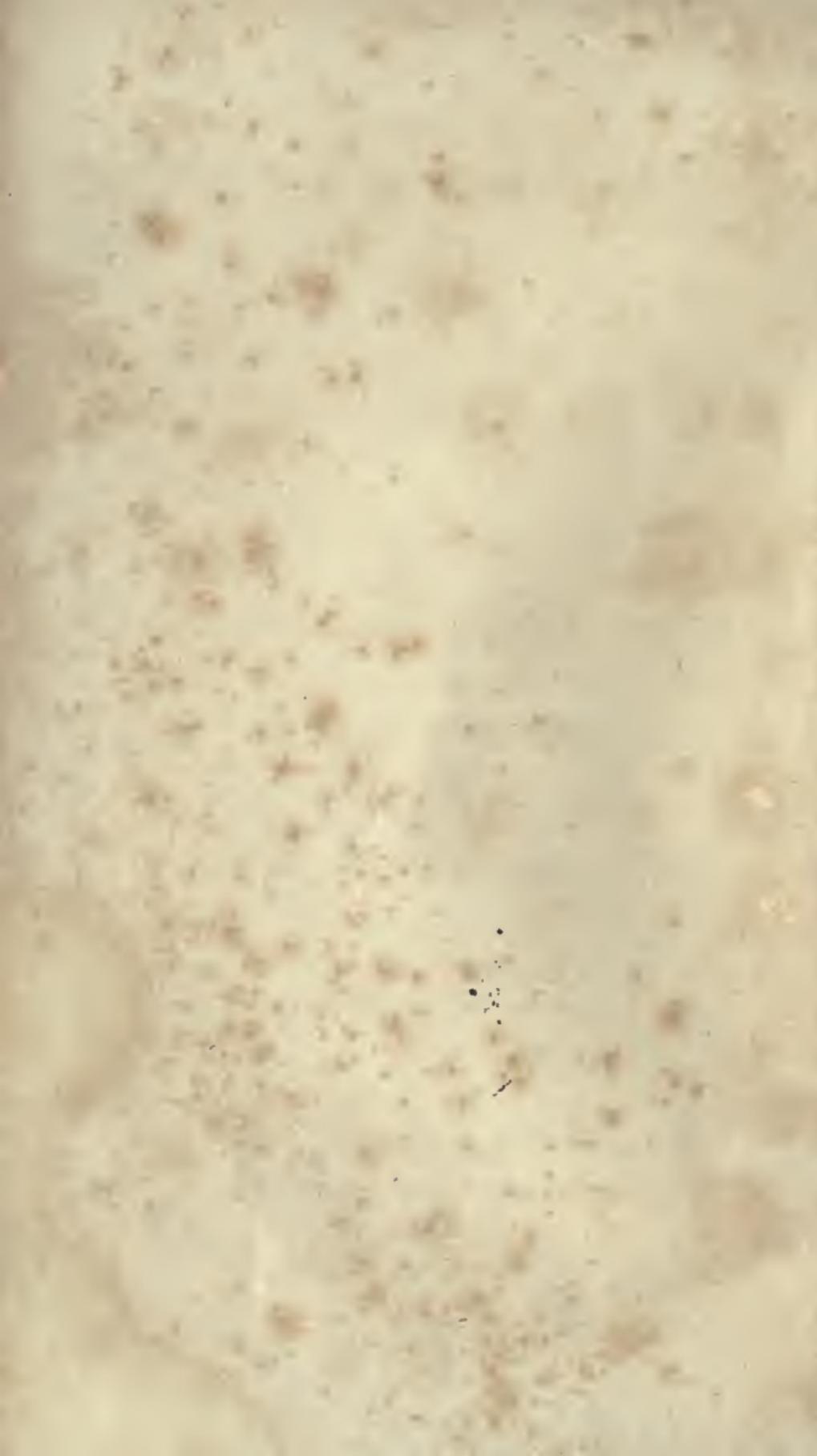
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NOTES  
ON THE  
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

DESIGNED FOR  
SUNDAY SCHOOLS, BIBLE CLASSES,  
AND  
PRIVATE READING.

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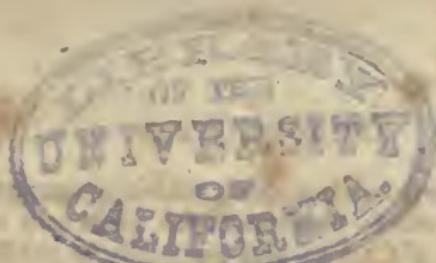
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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE book of the Acts of the Apostles contains one of the most interesting and important histories ever written. Dr. Dick, in his highly entertaining Lectures upon the Acts, remarks:—"The history of the first age of the Christian church is more instructive and engaging than that of any subsequent period. It is splendid, because it is miraculous; it is edifying, as it records many noble examples of faith, charity, patience, and zeal; it arrests the attention, and touches the heart, by displaying the triumph of the gospel over the combined malice and wisdom of the world."

There has been but little diversity of opinion as to the inspired author of this book; but by the unanimous testimony of the early Christians, and of modern critical scholars, it is ascribed to St. Luke. And this appears evident from its introduction. As is his Gospel, so also is this treatise inscribed to Theophilus, the former communication to whom is noticed in the commencement of this. Of a large proportion of the events related in this book, St. Luke was himself an eye-witness, and in many of them he was a participator. This book contains the most important scenes in the lives of St. Peter and St. Paul, and in the history of the Christian church, from the ascension of Christ to the imprisonment of Paul in Rome, a period of about thirty years. Luke appears to have accompanied St. Paul from Troas to Philippi, attending him to Jerusalem, and afterward to Rome, where he remained with him two years during the apostle's first confinement. From the fact of its extending to this period, and making no reference to the liberation of St. Paul, most critics are of the opinion that it was composed for the churches, about A. D. 63; certainly before A. D. 65, the supposed date of St. Paul's death.

St. Luke seems not to have intended to write a regular and detailed history of the church during this period, for he omits many events that are noticed in the epistles, and passes over what occurred in Jerusalem after the conversion of Paul; gives no account of the introduction of Christianity into Egypt, or in the East; omits even to notice the origin of the important church at Rome: but his object seems to have been to give an authentic account of the outpouring of the Spirit, which, having been promised by our Lord, became an important and unanswerable attestation of his Messiahship and resurrection; to de-

## INTRODUCTION.

scribe the miraculous confirmations which accompanied the first preaching of the word; to recount the trials and sufferings of the early followers of Christ; and especially to exhibit the divine and miraculous claims of the Gentiles to admission into the Christian church—a claim strenuously disputed by the Jews at the time of the apostles. On this account a large space is given to the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius, and the decree of the church at Jerusalem concerning the ceremonial law.

The narrative of the Acts of the Apostles is perspicuous and noble. It is worthy of remark, how well St. Luke has supported the character of each person whom he has introduced as speaking. Thus the speeches and discourses of St. Peter are given with simplicity, and are destitute of all those ornaments which usually occur in the orations of the Greeks and Romans. Nearly similar are the speeches of St. Paul which were addressed to the Jews; while those delivered by the same apostle before a heathen audience are widely different. In the latter, though not adorned with the flowers of rhetoric, the language is pointed and energetic, and the materials are judiciously selected and arranged, as is apparent in his speech delivered at Athens, (Acts xvii, 22-31,) and in his two defenses before the Roman governors of Judea. Acts xxiv, xxvi.

This book bears every evidence of having been written by a person acquainted with the various circumstances which he relates, and who was both able and disposed to give a faithful narrative of everything that occurred. The historical details, especially the incidental circumstances mentioned by St. Luke, so exactly correspond, and that without any design on the part of the writer, with the accounts furnished in St. Paul's epistles and in ancient histories, Jewish and heathen, that any person who had *forged* such a history in later ages must have betrayed himself by alluding to some customs and opinions which have since sprung up, or by misrepresenting some circumstances, or by employing some phrase or expression then in use.

If, therefore, the *history* is genuine and authentic, Christianity cannot be false; for a religion so pure in itself, attested by so many miraculous evidences, and so well adapted to the wants and woes of man, cannot but have originated with the infinitely wise and eternal God.



## NOTES

ON

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

### CHAPTER I.

1. Christ, preparing his apostles for beholding his ascension, gathereth them together into the mount Olivet ; commandeth them to expect in Jerusalem the sending down of the Holy Ghost ; promiseth, after a few days, to send it, by virtue whereof they should be witnesses unto him, even to the uttermost parts of the earth. 9. After his ascension they are warned by two angels to depart, and to set their minds upon his second coming. 12. They accordingly return, and, giving themselves to prayer, choose Matthias apostle in the place of Judas.

THE former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through

1. *The former treatise have I made]* The former book or discourse, referring undoubtedly to the Gospel written by St. Luke, and addressed to the same person. *Theophilus]* There are various opinions concerning this person. Some have supposed that no particular individual was intended, but that, by the term Theophilus, (a friend of God,) all Christians are signified ; and that, to the church of Christ, Luke thus dedicates his writings. The most reasonable opinion, however, is, that “he was an inquiring convert to Christianity, probably a native of Italy, but certainly not of Palestine;” as Luke continually makes explanations, in reference to this country, that a resident, or one familiarly acquainted with it, would not have needed. *Of all that Jesus began to do and teach]* This cannot mean that every act and discourse of our Lord had been related in Luke’s Gospel, for many additional discourses are given by St. John ; but that he had there given a summary of all the chief and most important events necessary to a proper understanding of the gospel of Christ. *Began both to do and to teach*, is a Hebrew and Greek idiom, meaning, simply, all that Jesus did and taught.

2. *Until the day in which he was taken up]* The Gospel by St. Luke commences with the earliest history of Christ, and continues the relation down to the hour when he blessed his disciples, and “was parted from them and carried up into heaven.” Luke xxiv, 51. *After*

the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen :

3 To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God :

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*that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments]* The commandments referred to here, are the precepts and instructions given to the disciples, by our Lord, after his resurrection, and before his ascension. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit he opened their understandings, and enabled them clearly to comprehend the great commission he had given them ; for, although the Spirit was bestowed in a greater measure after the ascension of Christ, still, before this, we learn that Jesus “ breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” John xx, 22. *Unto the apostles]* The eleven that remained after the death of the treacherous Judas.

3. *To whom also he showed himself alive]* They had been with him at the time he was betrayed into the hands of the high priests, at the hour of his death and burial, and had almost despaired of his being the Redeemer of Israel ; but now he had given them the most convincing testimony of his power and Messiahship : he appears before them—alive—bearing the same countenance, with the same form he had before his crucifixion, and exhibiting the marks of the wounds received upon the cross. *After his passion]* After his season of suffering—his agony in the garden and on the cross. The word *passion* is not used here, in its present and common meaning, as significant of an excitement of the mind, but in its original sense, as expressive of the endurance of great suffering ; and it is still used to express the whole scene of our Lord’s bitter pain in the garden and upon the cross—this being called *his passion*. *By many infallible proofs]* By proofs or evidences that could not be mistaken. He had appeared to different ones at different times—exhibited his body—spoken with his ordinary voice ; his disciples were permitted to eat and drink with him, to examine the prints of his wounds ; his doctrines were the same as those delivered before his death ; he remained with his disciples forty days, and was seen at appointed places, even, by five hundred at once. *Being seen of them forty days]* Being seen of them frequently during the space of forty days. We are not informed, in the Scripture account of these events, that he remained continually with them, but should infer that he did not. (Compare John xx, 19–26 with xxi, 1–14.) Where he was in the intervals between his manifestations we cannot tell. “ He had all power in heaven and on earth ;” and there was no lack of ability to appear or to disappear, to be in one

4 And being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *said he*, ye have heard of me.

5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

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place or in another, just as he chose. *Speaking of things pertaining to the kingdom of God]* Giving them instructions in reference to the establishment, the discipline, and the doctrines of his church—the spiritual kingdom, that Christ, through their instrumentality, was about to establish on the earth.

4, 5. (See Notes on the Gospels, vol. iv, pp. 497, 498.)

6. *When they therefore were come together]* It seems highly probable that, by appointment, Jesus met all the apostles in Jerusalem just before his ascension, giving them important instructions in reference to their course after his removal from them. (See Notes on the Gospels, vol. iv, p. 497.) On the day of his ascension he seems to have led his disciples forth from Jerusalem to the summit of the Mount of Olives, and as far as the borders of Bethany, conversing with them, opening the Scriptures to their understanding, and directing their attention to the great blessing of the Holy Ghost that they would receive not many days from this time. *Wilt thou at this time restore, &c.]* This question was probably asked at the scene of the ascension. On account of the appointment of this interview by the Saviour, and from the character of the preceding conversation of our Lord, the apostles had reason to expect that some momentous event was about to transpire. Before our Lord's death, the apostles and the other disciples cherished the common opinion of the Jews, that the Messiah would relieve them from the bondage of a temporal power, and, giving them temporal dominion over all their enemies, would sit literally on the throne of his father David and administer the government. Our Lord clearly assured them that his kingdom was not of this world; and, by yielding himself up to his enemies and suffering a painful death at their hand, had given them evidence that it was not his intention, by force, to establish his sway in the world. With his resurrection their former expectations were revived again; and when the "promise of the Father" was referred to by our Lord, and an assurance given that it should be soon fulfilled, their eager curiosity is immediately excited to know if the Roman power is at this time to be broken, and the kingdom to be restored to Israel.

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in

7. *It is not for you to know, &c.]* Our Saviour does not attempt to correct their views as to the character of the promise alluded to. This they will themselves discover on the appointed day; and the Holy Spirit, then given, will "guide them into all truth," in reference to these matters. He takes occasion, however, to convey, in direct answer to their question, a most important principle. It has pleased God not to make a revelation of the *time*—the definite period or the *seasons*—the exact date—when some of the most remarkable prophetic events will transpire. These the Father has fixed by his own authority, and will bring them to a certain fulfillment in his own time. Not even to the angels in heaven are these things revealed, and our Lord did not make them known to his apostles while with them. (Matt. xxiv, 36–51. Notes on the Gospels, vol. iv, p. 184.) *Times* denote a longer, *seasons* a shorter, period. Professor Ripley makes the following judicious reflections upon this passage: "The remark of our Saviour to his inquisitive disciples conveys a salutary lesson to us all. When we feel desirous to pry into the counsels of God respecting the future, and to inquire at what time the millennial glory of the church will be ushered in, or when the end of the world will come, or the day of judgment break upon the world, let us check such unprofitable inquiries by remembering, that it is not for us to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath established by his own authority, and kept concealed in his own mind. Soldiers in active service are not expected to be inquiring into the times and seasons when their general's plans are to be executed. Be it, rather, our solicitude to be always ready for our personal summons to the bar of God, and to be always living in such a manner that we shall contribute to the preparation of others, as well as of ourselves, to give up the final account with joy." *Put in his own power]* Kept within the divine mind. Reserved to himself.

8. *But ye shall receive power, &c.]* Be endowed with the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. In the margin this is translated, Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you; both renderings referring to the same event. The word *power* here refers to the spiritual aid which they would receive from the Holy Spirit; namely, the power of speaking with divers tongues, of enduring great trials, of working miracles, and of otherwise spreading the gospel. *Ye shall be witnesses unto me]* Shall give in your testimony of what you have seen,

Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

and heard, and felt. For this purpose Christ had chosen them. They had been with him three years, witnessed his miracles, listened to his doctrines, marked his purity. They had seen him mocked, scourged, crucified, and buried. He had appeared to them again, by infallible signs, a risen Saviour. Now he sends them first to Jerusalem, where the most important of these events had transpired, to bear public testimony to the truth of these things; so that, the facts not being questioned where they happened, the rest of the world could have no grounds of disbelief. But their work was not to end here. They were to testify of Christ, also, throughout Judea, among the despised Samaritans, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. Thus did the apostles. They preached Christ, and him crucified, in sight of the hill upon which he was crucified, at an early day founded a church in Samaria, (chap. viii, 6–15,) and then scattered themselves throughout the world. It is our duty to be witnesses unto Jesus :

“What we have *felt* and *seen*,  
With confidence to tell;  
And publish to the sons of men  
The signs infallible.”

By our sympathies, prayers, and contributions, if we do not give ourselves personally to the work, we should seek to spread the knowledge of the Messiah to earth’s remotest bounds. The word *μαρτυρεῖς*, *witnesses, confessors*, has been applied to those holy men who suffered the loss of life for Christ’s sake. They are termed *martyrs* because they testified of Christ, or witnessed to the truth of his religion, with their blood; by their deaths they confessed that he was the only Saviour.

9. *And when he had spoken these things, &c.]* (See Notes on the Gospels, vol. iv, p. 507.) In the notes upon St. Mark’s account of the ascension, the satisfactory character of this event is noticed. It did not transpire in the darkness of the night; Jesus did not secretly take himself away. In the light of broad day, while their senses were bright and active, as they were conversing together—in the body that he had borne while on the earth, bearing the marks of his sufferings—before the fastened gaze of his disciples, he began to ascend. They saw him rise until, in the region of the clouds, he was veiled from their eyes; or perhaps, as on the mount, a luminous cloud descended and enveloped him as he arose. “This event was exceedingly important, because, 1st. It was a confirmation of the truth of the Chris-

10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

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tian religion. 2d. It enabled the apostles to state distinctly *where* the Saviour was, and *at once* directed their affections and their thoughts away from the earth, and opened their eyes on the glory of the scheme of religion they were to establish. If their Saviour were *in heaven*, it settled the question about the *nature* of his kingdom. It was clear that it was not designed to be a *temporal* kingdom."—BARNES.

10. *Steadfastly*] Attentively—continually. *Two men*] Angels in human form. In this form these heavenly visitants usually manifested themselves to those whom they visited at God's command. This form would be most likely to calm the fears that such a visitant must inspire, and would be the most grateful to the human vision. (See Matt. xxviii, 2; Luke xxiv, 4.) *In white apparel*] Emblematical of their purity. Thus it is said of the faithful members of the church in Sardis: "They shall walk with me in white." Rev. iii, 4. John beheld a "multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with *white robes*, and palms in their hands." Rev. vii, 9.

11. *Ye men of Galilee*] The apostles had been residents of Galilee—the northern province of Palestine in the time of Christ—before Jesus called them. *Why stand ye*] This question might have been asked by the angels in order to call the abstracted attention of the apostles to themselves, and secure their belief in a more important event than the one they were witnessing. There might have been a little censure in it, as if they would say, "Why look so astonished, so sorrowful, so overwhelmed? Did you not believe him when he said, 'I must go to my Father,' and 'It is expedient that I go away?' If you love him now, keep his commandments, and witness for him in Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth." "We may see from this that it is not our duty to stand in idleness, and to gaze toward heaven. We, as well as the apostles, have a great work to do, and we should actively engage in it without delay." *Shall so come in like manner*] That is, he shall come suddenly and personally, appearing clearly to all, and descending in a luminous and heavenly cloud. Our Lord foretold this second coming to judge the world before his death, Matt. xxvi, 64: "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem, from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath-day's journey.

13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and An-

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power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." In 2 Thess. i, 7, 8, we are told that "the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire." How important, "seeing we look for such things, to be diligent, that we may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless!"

12. *The mount called Olivet]* The Mount of Olives. (See Longking's Notes on the Gospels, vol. iii, p. 32; vol. iv, p. 8.) *A sabbath-day's journey]* "A sabbath-day's journey was the distance beyond which the 'traditions of the elders' made it unlawful for a Jew to travel on the sabbath day. The distance was two thousand cubits from any town or city," or about two-thirds of a mile. Journeying on the sabbath was strictly forbidden to the Jews; and the prohibition in Exodus xvi, 29, "Let no man go out of his place on the seventh day," they understood as an injunction not to remove from the town, or place of their habitation, *except* for the distance of two thousand cubits; which space was allowed by the Rabbins because of the two thousand cubits measured out on each side from the cities of the Levites, (Num. xxxv, 5,) and also the two thousand cubits left between the ark and the people. Josh. iii, 4. This, however, was a tradition of the elders, and not a law of God. While they openly broke God's laws, they most scrupulously kept these traditions. Whoever transgressed this precept was punished with stripes. "It should be observed, however, that the rule only applies to distances *from* a town; for, whatever was the extent of a town, a person might walk to *any* distance *within* its limits without transgression. Thus, in London, (for the regulation is still rigidly enforced,) Jews often go a very considerable distance, on the sabbath day, to and from their synagogues."—*Eng. Pic. Bible.* "Olivet was but *five* furlongs from Jerusalem, and Bethany was fifteen. The first region, or tract, of Mount Olivet, which was called *Bethany*, was distant from the city a sabbath-day's journey, or seven furlongs and a half.—When, therefore, our Lord came to the place where these two tracts touched each other, he there ascended, which place was distant from Jerusalem a sabbath-day's journey, as St. Luke here remarks."—**DR. CLARKE.**

13. *And when they were come in]* To Jerusalem. *Into an upper room]* Some have supposed, from what is stated in St. Luke's Gospel, namely, that when they returned from the Mount of Olives *they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God*, that the *upper room*

drew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son of Alpheus*, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother of James*.

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

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referred to was one of the upper rooms in the courts of the temple. But this expression may mean no more than that they passed their time principally in the temple, and were engaged continually in acts of worship. It was common, among the Jews, to have a large upper room devoted to religious purposes, where they read and conversed upon the law, attended to their social prayers, and celebrated the passover. In such a room Christ and his disciples partook of the last supper; and in a room of this character, probably in the third story, Paul preached when Eutychus fell out of the window upon the pavement beneath. The room referred to was probably such an one as is above described, in the house where Peter and the other apostles resided. At a later date "the early Christians were accustomed to assemble in some convenient upper room, set apart for the purpose." *James the son of Alpheus*] Called James the Less, to distinguish him from the other James, who was the brother of John and son of Zebedee. "Alpheus is believed to be the same as Cleophas, mentioned, in John xix, 25, as the husband of Mary, who was sister to our Lord's mother. (Compare Mark xv, 40, where Mary is called the mother of James the Less.) This James, therefore, and his brother Judas, or Jude, were own cousins to Jesus." *Simon Zelotes*] Called, in Matt. x, 4, Simon the *Canaanite*, or, as it should be spelt, *Cananite*; the two appellations, the first Greek, the last Hebrew, referring to the same thing. "In the age of Christ and the apostles there was, among the Jews, an extensive association of private individuals, who undertook to maintain the purity of the national religion by inflicting punishment, without the form of trial, on all Jews who should violate their sacred institutions. They declared themselves impelled by more than human zeal."—RIPLEY. Simon was, as his surnames signify, probably a member of this association before he became a disciple of Christ.

14. *These all continued*] They persevered in their prayers—were united in their object—praying for the fulfillment of the "promise of the Father." They made this their chief and constant employment, waiting in patient expectation for the blessing of the Comforter. *With the women*] Those, perhaps, who had followed Jesus from Galilee. Matt. xxvii, 55. The wives of some of the apostles and disciples might have been also included. It is known that at least Peter was married.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of the names together were about a hundred and twenty,)

16 Men *and* brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake

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Matt. viii, 14. *And Mary the mother of Jesus]* "Here is the last time," says Whitby, "that we have any mention of this blessed mother. Of the story of her ascension into heaven, as held by the Romanists, St. Luke says nothing, because he knew nothing of it; that idle tale being the invention of later ages from apocryphal writings and vain revelations." If it had been the intention of the Bible that divine worship should be paid to the Virgin Mary, as do the Romanists to this day, how strange that she should receive so slight a notice from the apostles; and that none of them, or of the early disciples, rendered it to her. *And with his brethren]* The near relatives of our Lord, who, although they did not at first believe in him, afterward were converted and became his disciples. John vii, 3-5.

15. *In those days]* Between the ascension and the day of Pentecost, while they were engaged in united prayer and devotion. *The number of names]* The number of persons. Rev. iii, 4. *About a hundred and twenty]* That is, this number were assembled in this upper room; for the whole number of disciples at this time was much larger than this, our Lord having manifested himself to five hundred at once. 1 Cor. xv, 6.

16. *Men and brethren]* The conjunction is not in the original, which literally and more expressively reads, *men, brethren*; the first term being a token of respect, the latter of affection. *This scripture]* Name ly, the passage quoted in the twentieth verse. *Must needs have been fulfilled]* That is, all the prophecies of holy writ must be fulfilled, yet the divine Being compelled no one of those engaged in these transactions to do as they did; they acting voluntarily, according to their own free choice fulfilled what the divine mind saw would transpire at such times. Thus, inspired prophets foretold that Jesus would be betrayed, and put to a painful death; but this by no means compelled Judas, or any other persons, to act the guilty parts they did in the scene. They followed the purposes of their own depraved hearts; and so oppressed, as we shall see, was Judas with the crime he had committed, and the guilt that stained his soul on account of it, that he brought upon himself an awful end. *Which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David]* That is, David was inspired by the Holy Ghost when he wrote these words; a strong assurance of the inspiration of the book of Psalms—although the lips of David uttered them, they were

before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; indicated by the Holy Spirit. This inspiration the apostle Peter asserts of all Scripture. 2 Peter i, 21. *Which was guide]* (See Matt. xxvi, 14-16 and 47-49.)

17. *For he was numbered with us]* He was one of our number—one of the apostles. *Had obtained part of this ministry]* Had been appointed to this office—was honored with a participation in its exalted duties and rewards.

18, 19. These two verses should be read as if in a parenthesis; for they are probably not the words of Peter, but an explanation thrown in by Luke, the inspired penman, serving to illustrate, and render the application of the prophecy more apparent. Luke, in his Gospel, had given no account of the end of Judas; he thus presents it here. *This man purchased a field]* That is, although Judas himself did not directly buy the field, yet the money given him for the betrayal of his Master being returned, the chief priests applied it to this purpose. (See Matt. xxvii, 6-8.) A man is often said to do a thing when he furnishes the *means*, or gives the *occasion* for it. How miserable the end of this man! He coveted wealth, and it proved his ruin. Says Lightfoot, in reference to this disposal of his money: "No such thing was in Judas's intention when he bargained for his money. But Peter showeth the fruit and profit of his wretched covetousness; and how he, that thought to enlarge his resources, and to settle his habitation by such horrid means, came home by it with the contrary: his revenues to purchase land for others; his habitation to be desolate; and himself to come to so sad an end." *And falling headlong]* In Matt. xxvii, 5, we are informed that Judas hanged himself. Luke mentions another particular in this dreadful scene. The rope, or the tree upon which he hung himself, probably broke, and he, falling headlong, burst asunder by the concussion.

19. *And it was known; &c.]* These were not private, or secret occurrences. There could be no deception here. The matter was generally understood. These events did not happen in a corner. The betrayal of Jesus, the repentance of Judas, the purchase of the field, his awful end—all these were well known among the Jews. No one of the Jews of those days ever denied these facts. This may account

somuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, *Aceldama*, that is to say, The field of blood.

20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and, His bishopric let another take.

21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

for the multitudes that came to the assemblies of the apostles, as on the day of Pentecost. *In their proper tongue, Aceldama]* That is, the language then spoken by the Jews. This was not the pure Hebrew, for this had ceased to be a spoken language since the captivity; but a mixed language, styled the *Syro-Chaldaic*. The word *Aceldama* is compounded of two words of this dialect, and signifies, according to its translation, *a field of blood*.

20. *For it is written in the book of Psalms]* The apostle quotes two passages from the Psalms; the first is found in Psalm lxix, 25: "Let their habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents;" the second, Psalm cix, 8: "Let another take his office." Although these words were originally spoken against the enemies of David, yet they were peculiarly true of the enemy of him of whom David was a type. If in the latter Psalm, primarily, Doeg or Ahithophel, mortal enemies of David, were intended, still the Holy Spirit intended that it should have its full completion in the betrayer of the son of David, and this intention was suggested to Peter by the same Spirit. *Bishopric]* *Office, or charge.*

21. *Of these men which have companied with us]* As it was thought desirable to fill the vacated office of Judas, it seemed highly proper that one, who had been acquainted with the teachings, and an eye-witness of the miracles, of Jesus, should be appointed. Very probably one of the Seventy are referred to. Luke x, 1, 2. *Went in and out among us]* A phrase used to express great familiarity with all the acts of the Saviour, such as only a constant companion could have.

22. *Beginning from the baptism of John]* For there Christ's public life commenced, *to that same day* on which he was taken up into heaven. This was the last miraculous occurrence, and finished up the acts of the Saviour's life upon the earth. *Must one be ordained]* Chosen, or appointed. The term *ordained*, as now used, signifying a setting apart to a sacred office by established forms and ceremonies, conveys a wrong idea of the induction of Matthias into the apostleship; no ceremonies, or solemn ordination services, being used. The Greek

23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen,

word here translated *ordained*, is simply the verb *to be*. Mr. Wesley thus renders the verse: "Beginning from the baptism of John, till the day he was taken up from us, one *must be* a witness with us of his resurrection." *Of his resurrection*] As this was the great unanswerable argument in defense of the Christian religion. "They should bear testimony of this event in particular," says Diodati, "because Christ's life was known by all men, but his resurrection only by his apostles and disciples."

23. *And they appointed two*] Nominated, or set up, two as candidates; two, probably, of nearly equal abilities, between whose qualifications for the office they could not themselves decide—upright, experienced, pious men. We can but note the extreme care and the prayerfulness with which they discharged this solemn duty of setting one apart to the sacred functions of the ministry. *Joseph—Matthias*] We know little more of these than what is mentioned in these verses. *Justus*, the surname of Barsabas, is a Latin word signifying *just, upright*, and may have been given him for his noted integrity of character.

24. *And they prayed*] A very praiseworthy and successful way of securing a good minister. They had used the means within their reach, exercised their judgment as far as possible, and then left the disposal of the matter to Unerring Wisdom. *Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men*] They prayed to the Lord Jesus because the apostles were first chosen by him, were *his* apostles, and were to be his witnesses; and then they must ascribe to him the knowledge of all hearts, which is the property of God alone. That the Saviour was here addressed in the words "Thon, Lord," &c., and the attributes of God ascribed to him, may be seen from the fact that Peter, immediately before this, (ver. 21, 22,) had used the term *Lord*, when he unquestionably referred to the Messiah. In the election of presbyters afterward in the churches, the apostles commended them "unto the Lord, in whom they believed." Acts xiv, 23. That Lord undoubtedly was Christ. In the Revelation, the Saviour expressly assumes the title: "All the churehes shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts." "Upon this passage of Scripture alone we should be justified in offering up our prayers to Christ as 'our God, and our Lord'; as our only Mediator, and our only Saviour."—TOWNSEND. *Show whether of these two thou hast*

25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell *chosen*] Manifest, by the disposing of the lots, which one of these thou dost approve, and divinely designate to fill the vacant apostleship.

25. *That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship*] Assist, participate in the proper work of the apostle. As the word translated *part* signifies, take the *lot*, or portion of the ministry which Judas previously occupied. *From which Judas by transgression fell*] Through his covetousness, and most wicked betrayal of his Lord, he fell from his office, his discipleship, from grace, and the hope of final salvation. *That he might go to his own place*] That which his crimes had deserved, and which he had chosen for himself, far from the other apostles, in the region of death. Doddridge remarks, upon this melancholy and awful end, "That his example, dreadful as it is, shows us at once that no dignity of office can secure men from sin; and that, when they break through the solemn bonds of a remarkably high and eminent profession, they must expect a punishment proportionably signal." Dear reader, where is *your* place in the future world? You are rapidly traveling toward it. In a very few days you will enter upon your immortal inheritance.

"A point of time, a moment's space,  
Removes you to that heavenly place,  
Or shuts you up in hell."

Have you a mansion in the skies? Can you truly say,

"There is my house and *portion fair*,  
My treasure and my heart are there,  
And my abiding home?"

If not, you have no time to lose. It may be that eternity, with its endless realities, is just ready to open upon you. Let the language of your heart be,—

"My sole concern, my single care,  
To watch, and tremble, and prepare  
Against that fatal day!"

26. *And they gave forth their lots*] This manner of deciding special and important questions was in use among the Jews, because it seemed to leave these matters to the entire disposal of a divine providence. David divided the priests by lot. 1 Chron. xxiv, 5. The land of Canaan was thus divided. Joshua xiv, 2. The scape-goat was chosen in this manner. Lev. xvi, 8. And probably, from allusions in the Proverbs, lots were used in courts of justice in the days of Solomon.

upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Prov. xvi, 33; xviii, 18. Grotius imagines their manner of casting lots on this occasion was thus: They put their lots—either stones, slips of wood, metal, or pieces of parchment—into two urns, one of which contained the names of Joseph and Matthias, and the other a blank and the word apostle. In drawing these out of the urns the blank came up with the name of Joseph, and the lot on which was written the word apostle came up with the name of Matthias. This being in answer to their prayers, they concluded that Matthias was the man whom the Lord had chosen to the apostleship. In the East, to this day, casting lots is practiced. Roberts says: “In nearly all cases where reason cannot decide, or where the right of several claimants to one article has to be settled, recourse is had to the lot, which ‘causeth contentions to cease.’” *And he was numbered with the eleven apostles]* The word translated *numbered* is a compound Greek term, derived from a word signifying a pebble, or a small stone, and came to be used to express numeration, as stones or pebbles were used among the Greeks in balloting, for lots, and for counting. The question was to be decided by lot: they sought the blessing of God, and then drew the lot. Matthias was designated, and he immediately became, by previous arrangement, an apostle. Their number was now full. Christ had originally chosen twelve, having reference, perhaps, to the constitution of the Old Testament church, divided into twelve tribes; and also to enable him to send them two and two, to be assistants and counselors of each other. We hear no more of Matthias. Where he labored and died we know not.

No others, excepting Paul, were ever elected to fill this office. He was especially and immediately called of God, in a miraculous manner, to be an apostle to the Gentiles. No following ministers have succeeded to the office and peculiar powers of the apostles. They were called, and set apart for a specific purpose, and endowed with miraculous powers, with no divine direction to appoint successors to their immediate office. They differ from all other ministers of the gospel,

1. In a direct call and appointment to that peculiar office by Christ, personally. Gal. i, 1.
2. They were taught by immediate revelation. Gal. i, 12.
3. They were infallible teachers. Gal. i, 8, 12.
4. They had a commission of universal authority. 2 Cor. x, 13, 16; Rom. i, 14, 16.
5. And the power of working miracles, and of communicating this power. Acts viii, 14–19; xix, 6; 1 Tim. i, 6.

## CHAPTER II.

1. The apostles filled with the Holy Ghost, and speaking diverse languages, are admired by some, and derided by others. 14. Whom Peter disproving, and showing that the apostles spake by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus was risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, had poured down the same Holy Ghost, and was the Messias, a man known to them to be approved of God by his miracles, wonders, and signs, and not crucified without his determinate counsel and foreknowledge. 37. He baptizeth a great number that were converted. 41. Who afterward devoutly and charitably converse together: the apostles working many miracles, and God daily increasing his church.

AND when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

1. *And when the day of Pentecost]* This was one of the great annual feasts among the Jews, at which time all the adult males resorted to Jerusalem. Its name is derived from a Greek word signifying *fifty*, and it received this name from its being celebrated on the fiftieth day after the first day of unleavened bread, or of the passover. This feast is called, in the Old Testament, "the feast of weeks," on account of its being held seven weeks, or, according to the Hebrew phrase, a week of weeks, from the first day of the passover, which always commenced on the sabbath. It was instituted by the following divine command: "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat-offering unto the Lord." Lev. xxiii, 15, 16. It is also called "the feast of harvest," Exod. xxiii, 16; that is, of the wheat harvest, the first-fruits of which were offered on this occasion, on which account it is called "the day of first-fruits." Num. xxviii, 26. "The primary object of the festival was undoubtedly to thank God for the blessings of the season. In Deut. xxvi, 5-11, is given the beautiful form of thanksgiving which was appointed to be used on this occasion." The Rabbins entitle this feast "the day of the giving of the law," they believing and teaching, as do the modern Jews, that it was intended to commemorate that event, which took place, as they think, and with much probability, fifty days after their departure from Egypt, and the celebration of the first passover. The Jewish sacrifices were, at first, acknowledged by fire from heaven, descending upon the holy altar; and when Christ, the substance of these shadows, appeared, and laid his body upon the altar of the cross, for ever abolishing all other burnt-offerings, the apostles, who were the first priests and ministers by the side of this altar, and offered themselves as *living sacrifices*, were bless-

ed with the same token of divine approbation—fire fell from heaven and rested upon them. There was a peculiar propriety in the time when this extraordinary miracle transpired; and the circumstances were of such a character as to prevent the possibility of fraud on the part of the apostles. In the first place, there were immense multitudes of Jews from all parts of the world, as well as from Palestine, assembled at Jerusalem at this time—probably between one and two millions. Only fifty days before they had crucified the Lord of glory, and their prejudices against him whom they esteemed an impostor would not be easily removed. During these days, our Saviour had arisen and ascended into heaven. The report of these extraordinary events would tend to collect together those who were present during that memorable passover, and others, drawn by a strong curiosity. Our Lord took this period to exhibit his divine power and kingdom, by working a most extraordinary miracle before the eyes of those who had witnessed his humiliation. By means of the vast number of strangers present at this time at Jerusalem, the news of this astonishing event could be spread all over the known world, and thus a way be opened for the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom in every direction. *Was fully come]* These words are thus translated by Schmidt: “And when the time was fulfilled even up to the day of Pentecost.” That is, the appointed day had come. These words are made emphatic, perhaps, to signify that this noted event did not transpire until after the multitudes had arrived to wait upon the feast, and the appropriate services had commenced. It did not transpire unobserved, or in a corner. It is supposed that this was the first day of the week, although it cannot be definitely proved, the Jews disagreeing among themselves. There is, if this is the case, and the probabilities are in favor of it, a great propriety in styling this day, which is now the Christian sabbath, the “Lord’s day.” By his resurrection, and by this baptism of the Holy Spirit, he has consecrated the day, and rendered it eminently holy in its character. *They were all with one accord in one place]* By the *all* mentioned here, probably not only the apostles, but the hundred and twenty spoken of in the preceding chapter, (verse 15,) were meant. They had continued together since the resurrection, united and harmonized by one great object, employing themselves in acts of devotion, and earnest prayer for the fulfillment of Christ’s last promise of the Comforter.

Who can tell the effect of faithful, united prayer, when poured out from the longing hearts of a band of Christian men and women, all united, of one accord, in one place? Will not Christ be there? And the influences of the Comforter, will they be wanting on such an occasion? Let us learn the power and grandeur of united, believing

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

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prayer. There are a variety of opinions concerning the place where they were assembled. From the intimation contained in the forty-sixth verse, some have thought an upper room of the temple was the scene of the miracle. It is hardly probable, however, that the malice of the Jews would have permitted the followers of Christ, so soon after his crucifixion, to have assembled regularly, and in a body, in any room of the temple; and it is more probable that some upper room in a private house near the temple had been set apart for religious worship, and that here they met often and took sweet counsel together.

2. *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven]* Although they were momentarily expecting some occurrence, yet this came upon them without warning; it broke above them suddenly. The term *sound* may apply to any noise or report, as the sound of a trumpet; in this case it was *like* a mighty rushing wind. There is no evidence that there was any wind, and this made the miracle more evident; but a noise was heard *resembling* a wind-tornado more than anything else, but entirely supernatural. *From heaven]* From the upper regions—seeming to rush down from the skies. Ordinary storms and winds sweep along horizontally or obliquely; this seemed to beat directly down from above, serving to call their attention in that direction, prepare their minds for the event about to occur, and declare the divine Originator of it.

It was thus God signified his presence, and his intention of communicating with the children of Israel on Mount Sinai. The Holy Spirit chose this external evidence of his power and presence, and signified to their material senses, by the rushing sound of a tornado, his spiritual coming, that they might be prepared for his unseen offices upon their hearts. It is worthy of notice, that our Lord, when speaking of the work of the Spirit, in the new birth, to Nicodemus, likens it to the effects of the unseen wind, whose presence is only known by its sound and its effects, John iii, 8; and when he conveyed to the apostles the Holy Ghost, he *breathed* on them, John xx, 22; these figures presenting the best illustration of the character of the operations of the Spirit. Diodati remarks: By this wind the Holy Ghost is represented; for, as it is not in the power of the whole world to hinder the wind from blowing, even so there is no power under heaven which can turn back the wind of God's Spirit, which is blown by the mouth of his ministers in the preaching of the gospel. *It*

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

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*filled all the house where they were sitting]* Was distinctly heard in every part of the house.

3. *And there appeared unto them cloven tongues]* In addition to the sense of hearing, another sense was addressed—that of seeing. The form of tongues appeared, resembling a flame, *cloven*, or divided at the top, and sat upon each of them. This was an emblem of the gift about to be bestowed upon them—the power of speaking clearly, and so as to be understood, the languages of others, without having previously acquired them. The *cloven* tongues expressed the *variety* of these languages; the *fire*, the burning zeal with which they should speak, melting, purifying, and consuming, and the mighty effect that should follow their preaching upon the hearts of their hearers. “Fire had always been considered by the Jews as an emblem of the visible presence of the Deity; the people of Israel (who were providentially present from every part of the civilized globe) now saw it descend in the form of cloven tongues upon the despised followers of the crucified Jesus. They saw it descend upon them on the anniversary of the same day, when the law, which was to bring them to Christ, was first delivered to them: nor could any outward form be more appropriate or figurative to represent the gift and powers it was intended to convey.”—TOWNSEND. It is thought by some that the shape of the mitre worn by bishops was taken from the supposed form of these divided tongues, significant of their succeeding to the apostolic office. But, unfortunately for this signification, the tongues of fire settled alike upon the heads of all the disciples present, as well as upon the apostles, thus placing the mitre alike upon the head of all the ministers of the word, and conveying no peculiar prerogatives.

4. *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost]* All that had preceded were but so many signs of the approach and presence of the Spirit. Now he comes himself. The attention of the disciples had been arrested—their eyes were turned toward heaven—the tongues of fire sat upon them, and the Holy Ghost entered their hearts, filling them with unutterable delight, opening and quickening their spiritual vision, and leading them into all truth, according to Christ’s promise. O, what a delightful and desirable state of mind to be in—to be filled with the Holy Ghost! And is not this, Christian friend, your privilege? Eph. v, 18. *And began to speak with other tongues]* Commenced without any previous acquaintance or study to preach

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

in other languages besides their own, as if these had been their native tongues. *As the Spirit gave them utterance]* This was all a miracle—an astonishing miracle. These languages—the most difficult of all studies—instead of being attained by long application, were immediately bestowed upon them by a divine gift. Under the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they presented the living truths that were then glowing in their hearts, in various tongues, they themselves understanding as clearly the foreign accents of their own lips, as those astonished strangers did, who heard them speak in their native dialects. “A variety of opinions has been advanced respecting this miracle of Pentecost. The most rational, and the most general is, that the gift of tongues lasted during the ministry of the apostles; and that, as soon as the purpose for which it was given was accomplished, it was gradually withdrawn.” There are perceptible reasons for this peculiar and astonishing miracle:

1. It was important that the divine origin of the gospel, now that its Head was removed, should be publicly established by some unquestionable exhibition of divine power. What more convincing miracle could have been wrought? In the midst of strangers from every nation under the heavens, these humble, uneducated Galileans, are made at once, and with propriety, to hold converse with them all; to speak so as to be understood, while the tempest without wind, and the flaming tongues, testified the origin of that power.

2. It was important that the gospel should be spread at once over the civilized world. How could this be done? It would have been more than enough labor for the whole life of the apostles to acquire these tongues, and to have become qualified to speak expertly in them, with sufficient clearness. While our Lord thus demonstrated his power and Godhead by the miracle, at the same time he fitted his servants with the indispensable qualifications for immediately preaching that gospel which was thus so clearly demonstrated, and for spreading, in every nation and tongue, the news of a Saviour who had died for the world.

5. *And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews]* These were Jews who were born and resided in distant cities, and Jewish proselytes who had been converted through their instrumentality in the foreign countries where they dwelt. They still preserved for Jerusalem, where were the temple and the sacrifices, the deepest affection; and on the return of the great festivals, those whose wealth and circumstances would admit of it, would go up to attend upon the solemn

6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

festivities. Being present at the Passover, and desiring also to attend the Pentecost, they had taken up a temporary residence in the city; or having accumulated sufficient property, had returned to the Holy City to spend the remnant of their days. The sacredness of the place; for Jerusalem was the city that almighty God himself had designated as the seat of his worship—the services of the temple—the great and solemn feasts—and the prevailing expectation that the promised Messiah was about to appear, and would, of course, show himself in his temple—all combined to attract thousands, whose circumstances permitted it, to the city on these interesting occasions, and to render it a place ardently loved as a scene of residence. *Devout men]* Upright, faithful Jews, attending to all the precepts of the ceremonial law, pious, and exemplary in their lives; Jews who, like Simeon, were waiting for the consolation of Israel, only delaying to have clear and decisive evidence that Jesus was the promised Messiah, to unite themselves with his followers. *Out of every nation under heaven]* This is to be understood as a general expression, conveying an idea of the almost universal distribution of the Jewish people, throughout the nations of the earth, and the very large attendance upon this feast. It was calculated, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened at the passover, that there were about three millions of Jews within the walls of the city. At the time of the sacking of the city by Nebuchadnezzar, thousands were carried into captivity in the East, but a very small number of whom ever returned again. The rest remained in Assyria, and spread themselves throughout all the continent of Asia, so that there is scarcely a country in Asia, to this day, where the Jew, or evidences of his former presence are not to be found. ~ The disturbances continually happening in Palestine after the return of a portion of the Jews, drove off others into Egypt, and the cities of the Roman and Grecian empires, so that when all the different bodies were represented at the great feasts, (and wherever the Jew wandered, he remembered Jerusalem and the passover,) it might with much propriety be said, that they were “out of every nation under heaven.”

6. *Now when this was noised abroad]* The words in the original will admit of being thus translated:—“Now this sound or noise having been made.” Referring to the sound as of a mighty rushing wind, which might have been heard generally in the city, or in the vicinity

7 And they were all amazed, and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans?

8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in

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of the temple, which would have attracted the attention of the multitude, while the loud and unusually zealous addresses of the disciples would have called observation to the upper room, where they were worshiping. Or, it might be, that the report had soon spread through the city of the astonishing miracle of tongues with which the disciples had just been endowed, and this would immediately have drawn the excited crowds together. *Were confounded]* Overwhelmed—perplexed—astounded. It was an occurrence that they could not understand—a most unheard-of and unaccountable affair. *Every man heard them speak in his own language]* The multitude was composed of foreign Jews of almost every nation and tongue, and yet each one heard these Galilean Jews speak to him in his own native dialect. “We may naturally suppose that as soon as any person presented himself to one of these disciples, he, the disciple, was immediately enabled to address him in his own language, however various this had been from the Jewish or Galilean dialects.”—CLARKE.

7. *And they were all amazed and marveled]* They were surprised beyond measure, and wondered within themselves what all these things meant. *Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans?]* Most of the disciples were from Galilee, the most northern province of the Holy Land. The term is not here used, as it is sometimes, by way of reproach, but as matter of surprise, that natives of Galilee should so correctly and freely speak the languages of distant and foreign nations.

8. *How hear we every man, &c.]* How is it possible, if these are Galileans, each of us speaking different tongues, that we hear them speak as if they were of the same nation? These things are surprising in the extreme. *In our own tongue, wherein we were born?]* In our mother tongue—the first language we learned, the dialect spoken in our native land.

9. Some have supposed that the enumeration of countries in verses 9–11 is given by St. Luke, the historian, to exhibit the amazing greatness of the miracle, and is not the language of the multitude, and that they should be thrown into a parenthesis. There is, however, no improbability in supposing that the crowd, surprised, numbered over to each other the various dialects that they heard the

Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

disciples speak as so many additional causes of wonder. "The list of names is so constructed as to lead a reader from east to west, and from north to south, or rather from a north-easterly point to the west and south. Beginning at Parthia, on the east, we are led to Pamphylia, one of the southern provinces of Asia Minor, thence, in a southern direction, to Egypt. From Egypt, the eye is turned in a western and north-western direction to Cyrene and Rome. The list concludes by bringing into one view two regions widely distant, and in a direction from west to east, namely, the Island of Crete, and the country of Arabia. In all these widely-distant countries and provinces, Jews were found in great numbers."—RIPLEY. *Parthians*] Parthia, from which came these Parthian Jews, was situated on the south of the Caspian Sea, east of Media and Persia. *Medes*] Media was also on the south of the Caspian, having the province of Parthia on the east, Armenia and Assyria on the west, and Persia on the south. Into the country of the Medes, the ten tribes, composing the kingdom of Israel, were transplanted in the Assyrian captivity by Tiglath-pileser and Shalmaneser. 1 Chron. v, 26; 2 Kings xvii, 6. *Elamites*] Elam, the eldest son of Shem, (Gen. x, 22,) settled in a country to the south of Media, and called it after his own name—Elam. Properly speaking, however, Elam denotes Elymais, a district of Persia, and it is sometimes applied to the whole of this empire by the prophets. *The dwellers in Mesopotamia*] Jews who resided in Mesopotamia—a country situated between the Tigris and Euphrates, sometimes called in Scripture, Padan-aram—an extremely fertile province, now called Diarbeker. It was the home of Abraham before he journeyed into Canaan. *In Judea*] This simple term has been a matter of no small discussion among commentators. It has been supposed by some that allusion would not have been made to Judea, where they then were, in connection with these foreign lands. Some have thought it an adjective connected with Mesopotamia, distinguishing the portion where the Jews resided by the title, Jewish Mesopotamia; others, that the word has been changed by mistake from India or Lydia, or some similar name. It seems, however, to be a fruitless expense of time and learning. The original text is plain and forcible enough. How natural, while mentioning other and various tongues which the disciples spake, to notice the Judean, differing from them all, and even differing somewhat from their own native Galilean! Or, perhaps, they mentioned the varied tongues, as the disciples addressed the different hearers—now addressing a

10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

Parthian, then a Mede, and a Mesopotamian, in their peculiar dialect, and then turning to a Jew, addressing him in his own pure idiom. Dr. Bloomfield, however, in his valuable critical Commentary, strenuously asserts the corruption of the text, and supposes it to have been changed from Idumæa, the Greek name for the two countries being very similar. *Cappadocia, Pontus]* These were provinces of Asia Minor, Pontus bordering upon the Black Sea, and Cappadocia being south of Pontus. *In Asia]* All the countries that have been mentioned were in Asia Proper; but the term is often used in a more restricted sense, signifying the western portion of the continent, lying between the Black Sea, upon the north, and the Mediterranean, on the south, extending west to the Euphrates and Mount Taurus. This is called Asia Minor, or Asia the less, and was the scene of extensive labors on the part of the apostles. The term Asia is also still further limited, sometimes, to the region of Ionia, bordering on the Ægean Sea, and including also Phrygia, Mysia, Lydia, and Caria, of which Ephesus was the capital. This was called Pronconsular Asia, being under the government of a Roman officer, who bore the title of proconsul.

10. *Phrygia, and Pamphylia]* Phrygia is a large central division of Asia Minor, where were the cities Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Laodicea, and Colosse, so familiar to the readers of Paul's Epistles. Pamphylia was south of Phrygia, bordering on the Mediterranean. *Egypt]* Vast numbers of Jews had settled in Egypt, so that it is said they formed two-fifths of the inhabitants of the great city of Alexandria. Egypt is a country of Africa, situated in the north-eastern part, having the Mediterranean upon the north, Ethiopia on the south, the Red Sea on the east, and Libya and the Great Desert upon the west; it occupies the narrow valley of the Nile, extending six hundred miles in length, and about one hundred and twenty miles in breadth. *In the parts of Libya]* A province of Africa, west of Egypt, and bordering upon the Mediterranean on the north and the Great Desert on the south. *Cyrene* was a city of Libya, situated on the Mediterranean, in the north-western part. *Strangers of Rome]* Jews who were born and resided in Rome, who were comparative strangers in Jerusalem. *Jews and proselytes]* Both those who were Jews by descent and those who had been converted to the Jewish belief, and circumcised, from among the heathen or Gentile nations.

11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

13 Others mocking, said, These men are full of new wine.

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11. *Cretes]* Inhabitants of the Island of Crete in the Mediterranean. *Arabians]* Arabia was a vast country on the south of Palestine, having the Red Sea on the west, the Indian Ocean on the south, and the Persian Gulf on the east. *The wonderful works of God]* Or, as it may be translated, *the great things of God*. The disciples used this remarkable gift of tongues, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, in setting forth the great plan of salvation, which almighty God had provided in the death of his Son, and the great power of God exhibited in his miracles, his death, his resurrection, and ascension into glory. Being either Jews or proselytes, and acquainted with the prophecies, they could understand the apostles, in these matters, of which a mere heathen would have had no conception.

12. *Were in doubt]* They were so much amazed as to be unable to form an opinion of the matter. They began to question each other, as would be natural, about the subject: "What meaneth this?"

13. *Others mocking]* Many of those who had assembled on this occasion were devout and grave men, of a teachable spirit; but with them, as in every rabble, were hasty and impetuous spirits, perhaps the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who detested and reviled the sect whose leader they had crucified—these, unawed by the stupendous miracle, or to drive away the convictions of their minds, cried out against them, and strove to excite derogatory suspicions. *These men are full of new wine]* By this, not newly-made wine is meant, but wine that has preserved its freshness and sweetness. Pentecost occurred in June, while the first vintage was not gathered until August. But the term used, corresponds with the expression *sweet wine*. The ancients had various ways of preserving this quality in their wines, and these wines became highly intoxicating. It tasted like *musk*, and was sometimes preserved by being kept in a cool situation. It was highly esteemed by the ancients as a morning draught. On this thanksgiving feast wine would have been used by the Jews; and they throw out the suspicion that these Galileans had made too free with their cups.

It is not rare that religious interest is attributed to such low and unworthy causes. The Christian is not *of the world*; his emotions and affections they cannot understand—he is to them as a madman or an impostor; but "wisdom is justified of her children." It seems

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day.

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singular that any should imagine, or suggest even, as a clumsy subterfuge, that languages could be correctly spoken through the influence of wine; but Lightfoot conjectures, that those who said this were not foreign Jews, but the native Jews, men of Judea, who, not understanding what the apostles spake in other languages than their own, imagined that (as drunken men are wont to do) they only babbled some foolish and unintelligible gibberish.

14. *But Peter, standing up with the eleven]* They probably spoke by turns, not all at once, at least after Peter commenced this public discourse. *Lifted up his voice]* Spake audibly, impressively, with a bold tone. *Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem]* By the term *dwell*, is here meant, sojourning, tarrying, remaining for a time, referring to the Jews who had come from distant cities, and were residing in Jerusalem during the feasts. Two classes—the home-born and foreign Jews—were present, and both of these the apostle addresses. *Be this known unto you]* Receive this explanation of this surprising event.

15. *For these are not drunken, &c.]* The audience that heard this address could not but feel the force of the apostle's defense, however at first sight it may not clearly appear to one unacquainted with Jewish customs. It was now but the third hour, or nine o'clock in the morning, the stated hour of morning prayers in the temple, previous to which the Jews rarely ever eat or drank; "and we learn," says Kitto, "equally from Josephus and the Talmudists, that, at their festivals, the Jews seldom indulged either in eating or drinking till the sacrifices were offered and the oblations made; and as these were numerous on such occasions, a practical abstinence until about noon was the consequence. This, perhaps, gives greater force to St. Peter's reference to the time of the day, as rendering the calumny the more incredible." How unwilling men are to attribute religious affections to the true cause! They will close their eyes to reason and unmistaken facts, and find a subterfuge in idle, unreasonable, and calumnious assertion. The power is of Beelzebub, or the people are crazy, or under strong animal excitement, or drunk—anything but admit the clearly evident work of the divine Spirit, exhibited in its powerful impressions and more wonderful effects. How often are these remarks justified when a vicinity is blessed with a gracious

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel,  
17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your

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revival! These things are hidden from the "wise, and prudent" in their own eyes, and revealed unto spiritual "babes."

16. *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel]* This state of things is a fulfillment of what was predicted seven hundred years before. As the audience were Jews, and acquainted with the prophecies, they would feel the force of this. The event was a manifest fulfillment of an allowed, inspired prophecy, at once justifying their exercises, and proving also the Messiahship of Jesus their Master. This prediction is found in Joel ii, 28. The traditions of the Jews, even, pointed out a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the Messiah; the argument, therefore, was unanswerable.

17. *And it shall come to pass in the last days, &c.]* From the seventeenth to the twenty-first verse the prophecy of Joel is quoted, not in the exact words of the prophet himself, but in language containing the same thoughts in substance. Luke, as well as Joel, was inspired, and under the inspiration of the Spirit he states the meaning and intention of this prophecy, now fulfilled. *Last days]* In the days of the Messiah, for so the Jewish Rabbins understood the term; or the inspired penmen might have at the same time had reference to the last days of the Jewish polity. The term is often, in the Old Testament, used to express an event in the future; as, for illustration, Jacob calls his sons and says to them, "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the *last days*;" that is, in future years. So in Micah iv, 1: "But in the *last days* (Heb. in *after times*) it shall come to pass that the mountain of the Lord's house," &c. The apostles refer often to the new dispensation under the same appellation. Other dispensations had been introductory to this; this was the *last*. Thus we read, in Heb. i, 2, "God—hath in these *last days* spoken unto us by his Son;" in 1 Peter i, 20, we are assured that Christ "was manifested in these *last times*;" while in Hebrews the same period is entitled the *end of the world*—Heb. ix, 26: "Now once in the *end of the world* hath Christ appeared to put away sin." This view of the subject will throw much light upon passages which have caused the sincere, but weak-minded and ignorant, to stumble, and draw false inferences from the Scriptures of truth in reference to the final end of the world. *I will pour out of my Spirit]* In Joel it says, "I will pour out my Spirit." I will pour out a portion of my Spirit. The language is significant of the abundance, the extraordinary

daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

measure, of the Spirit, which should be, as it were, *poured* out like water. By Spirit is here meant the third person of the blessed Trinity—the Holy Spirit, or the Comforter, as he is styled and promised by Christ. The office of the Holy Spirit is, to *convict of sin*: “And when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment,” John xvi, 8;—to *convert*: “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” John iii, 5;—to *guide*: “Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.” John xvi, 13. The *creator of all the graces of holiness* in the heart: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, joy, long-suffering,” &c. The *spread and success* of the gospel is attributed to the Spirit: “Until the Spirit be poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest,” &c. Isa. xxxii, 15, 18. Miraculous gifts, also, are attributed to the Spirit. 1 Cor. xii, 4, 10. These effects were accomplished at this time. The Spirit was poured out, thousands were pricked to the heart and converted, while the disciples were endued with miraculous gifts. What could these humble, uneducated, and naturally fearful men, have accomplished without divine aid? What did they not accomplish thus assisted! *Upon all flesh*] In the latter days the blessings of the Spirit were not to be restricted to any particular people or nation, but to be bestowed upon all;—Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, male and female, old and young. Peter himself did not yet so fully comprehend the import and force of this prophecy as afterward. *Shall prophesy*] The word here does not mean the foretelling of future events, but the proclaiming and teaching of the truth of the gospel, under the direct influence, and accompanied with the power, of the Holy Ghost, as the prophets were when they foretold future events. *Young men—see visions, old men—dream dreams*] Signifying the abundance of spiritual communications that God would make to his children in the latter days. In this way he had often appeared to his servants of old. He appeared to Abraham in many visions, to Jacob in a dream. So, also, he afterward appeared to Stephen in a glorious vision, to the apostle Paul, to Ananias, informing him of Paul’s conversion, and to the prayerful centurion; while he appeared to Peter in a trance, and sent him to the Gentiles, and in a dream he directed Paul to preach in Macedonia. Gen. xv, 1; xxviii, 12; Acts vii, 56; ix, 3, 10; x, 3, 10.

18 And on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

19 And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.

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18. *And on my servants, and—handmaidens]* In this multiplication of classes and persons, the universal distribution of the influences of the Spirit is signified: it should be restricted to none. These terms are often used to express the lowest conditions in life, but they should not be shut out from the blessings of the great salvation. As the Jews asserted that the spirit of prophecy never rested upon a *poor* man, these words are quoted to show that, under the gospel dispensation, the poor have the gospel preached unto them.

19, 20. The apostle continues to quote from the prophecy of Joel. Upon this Dr. Bloomfield remarks: "From these verses, we are only to infer that the events here predicted will take place at *the times* of the Messiah; but whether they are to be referred to the *first* advent of our Lord, at the destruction of Jerusalem, or his *second*, at the day of judgment, commentators are not agreed. They are exactly parallel to, and admit of, nay, perhaps require, the same mode of explication as Matt. xxiv, 29; Luke xxi, 25." Peter certainly could not mean to say that all these wonders transpired on the day of Pentecost; and great constraint must be placed upon the language here, and in the parallel passages, to narrow their full meaning down to the simple destruction of Jerusalem. That terrible event, preceded and attended by fearful portents and meteoric signs, may have been a symbol, a shadowing forth of the great and terrible day of the Lord, but not the full fulfillment of these prophecies. Mr. Barnes thus expresses the time referred to in these passages: These things would all "occur under that indefinite period called 'the last days,' the days of the Messiah, and BEFORE that day was closed by the great day of the Lord." *I will show wonders, &c.]* In the original, "I will give signs;"—prodigies, startling portents in the skies, and fearful earthquakes and eruptions in the earth. *Blood]* An emblem of war and slaughter. *Fire]* Of spreading devastation. *Vapor of smoke]* A very graphic and expressive symbol, completing the picture of destruction—the smoke of the ruin curtaining the scene of desolation.

We are assured by the Jewish historian, who certainly had no desire to corroborate the testimony of the evangelists, that frightful portents terrified, and ineffectually warned, the Jews of their approaching ruin. A meteor, like a flaming sword, and a fiery comet, hung over the city for a year. A light shone upon the temple and altar in the night as if it had been noonday. The massive gates of

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come.

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the temple opened without hands ; and a voice was heard from the most holy place, saying, "Let us depart from hence!" The admonitions of Jesus, the son of Ananus, were heard, who cried, during the long period of seven years, "Wo! wo! to Jerusalem, its temple and people!" Visions, thunderings and lightnings, and dreadful earthquakes, also added to the fearful character of these portentous days. The Jews were in continual war, before the fatal siege, with their neighbors. Anarchy, civil war, bloodshed, and awful confusion, made up the history of every day.

20. *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood]* Fearful and awful figures of wide-spreading and terrible desolations. Reference may be had to the general confusion and material changes in the earth, and perhaps in the solar system, before the ushering in of the final day of judgment; or if, as it is commonly supposed, the great heavenly bodies are symbols of government, civil and ecclesiastical, the confusion of kingdoms, overthrow of kings, and destruction of religious systems, may be portended by these startling representations. The language is so framed as to convey the idea that unutterable wo must be expected by those who do not become followers of the Messiah; and this idea is applicable to all, whether Gentiles or Jews, whether of one period or another. In all probability, the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of Peter, intended to excite in the minds of the Jews apprehensions of divine wrath to be endured by them, and especially by the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea, should they persist in rejecting Jesus as the promised Messiah. Their city and nation would be terribly overthrown, and their political state come to an end. Unless they repented they would perish, Luke xiii, 3, 5; and their doom, as a city and as a nation, would be a sad representation of the hopeless misery in which they would find themselves in the eternal world. *Before that great and notable day of the Lord come]* A day notable for the visitation of wrath and judgment upon the enemies of God, and therefore terrible, as Joel describes the day. This was to be the end of the series—the awful summing up of all the prodigies and calamities. It was to be a time when the Saviour should make an evident display of his power and majesty. This he did when he fulfilled his own prophecies at the destruction of Jerusalem, and this he will do again at the end of the world. The frightful carnage, sacking, and burning of Jerusalem, but faintly illustrated that more fearful day of the Lord, when the Lord himself shall

21 And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved.

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descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.

21. *Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved]* By calling upon the name of the Lord is meant earnest and penitent supplication for the forgiveness of sin, a devotion of the heart to him, and an obedience to his commands in our lives. It is expressive of devout, prayerful piety. The *name of the Lord* is a Hebraism, signifying the same as the *Lord* himself. As the apostle continually uses the term *Lord* in speaking of our Saviour, he undoubtedly refers to him by the appellation here, and thus presents him as a proper object of worship, exercising the divine prerogative of bestowing pardon and securing salvation. Verse 36. *Shall be saved]* As referring to the calamities impending over the Jewish nation, this salvation should be temporal. A belief in the gospel of Christ, and an obedience to its doctrines, would be their only and their certain security against these awful judgments. The history of these events justifies the assurance of the apostle. Not a Christian lost his life at the destruction of Jerusalem. Warned by the signs Christ had foretold, they fled in a body to a small city on the other side of the Jordan, and there remained unharmed, while the millions of unhappy Jews miserably perished, consumed by famine or the sword. Referring to the second coming of our Lord to judge the world, it signifies that spiritual and eternal salvation which those who call upon the Lord, who devoutly rely upon his atoning mercy, obeying his divine commands, shall experience in that awful hour when the elements are melted with the fervent heat, and all the dead are raised to stand before their Judge.

It is as true now, as when it was first uttered by Peter, that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Whosoever shall come, like the publican, humbled and broken-hearted, convicted of his sins, and feeling his indispensable need of pardon through the merits of Christ, crying out in sincerity, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," shall be, like him, justified; all his past sins forgiven, and he saved from the guilt, power, and dominion of sin; and, if faithful unto death, be everlastinglv saved in heaven. How simple the terms of salvation! The youngest reader of this volume can perform them. What excuse can any one have if unforgiven when he stands before Christ in judgment? O how much wiser to cry to the Saviour of mankind *now* for mercy, while he can and will forgive, than to cry out in vain, in that terrible day, for the rocks and mountains to cover you from the awful presence of the offended Judge!

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words ; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and

22. The apostle has thus opened the way to his important theme by meeting their objections, arising from the astonishing miracle performed, proving clearly that such an event was spoken of and foretold by the prophets, in connection with the coming of the Messiah ; while, at the same time, these extraordinary circumstances were to be the precursors of the most fearful calamities, from which they could only be saved by calling upon the name of the Saviour, the Christ appointed of God. *Ye men of Israel]* A most conciliating and honorable appellation ; the name having been bestowed upon their father Jacob on a peculiarly interesting occasion, (Gen. xxxii, 28,) and significant of God's peculiar regard for them as a nation, for their father's sake. *Jesus of Nazareth]* Our Lord was best known by this appellation ; at first given by way of reproach, from his residence in the small and ill-reputed town of the same name, and afterward becoming his distinguishing and most common appellative. *Approved of God]* Manifestly receiving the approbation of God, while professing to be the Messiah, by miraculous testimonials. *Miracles, wonders, and signs]* "The first of these words properly means the displays of power which Jesus made ; the second, the unusual or remarkable events which attended him ; the third, the signs or proofs that he was from God. Together, they denote the array, or series of remarkable works—raising the dead, healing the sick, &c., which showed that Jesus was sent from God. The proof which they furnished that he was from God was this : that God would not confer such power on an impostor, and that, therefore, he was what he pretended to be."—*BARNES.* *God did by him in the midst of you]* Peter is now proving that Jesus of Nazareth was the anointed Messiah, sent of God ; and he speaks with propriety of the works he performed in his official capacity as being wrought by God, he being commissioned and sent forth by the Father. Thus our Saviour attributes his miracles to the operation of the Father (John v, 36) and to his own power indiscriminately, (John ii, 11,) because, as he says of himself, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father : Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ?" This official relation of the Son of God to the Father, and the essential unity and equality of the Son with the Father, is beautifully set forth by the apostle in the first and second chapters of his Epistle to the Hebrews. *As ye yourselves also know]* Here is an incidental proof of the authenticity of the Christian history by the apostle. These mighty acts were not done in a corner ; they were not covered and excluded from the public eye. The apos-

signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-

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tles appealed to their own personal acquaintance with the facts to which he alluded. He had no fear of being contradicted. As inimical as the multitude felt toward Christ and his disciples, they dared not dispute the miracles he wrought, but attempted to attribute them to the devil or to wine.

23. *Him, being delivered]* Delivered into your hands (God permitting it according to his divine will and purpose) by Judas, by you delivered into the hands of the Roman governor, and by him, through your malice, delivered up to die the cruel death of the cross. *By the determinate counsel]* By the definite, and consequently immutable, determination of the divine mind. Thus our Saviour, in speaking of his approaching death, says: "And truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined." Luke xxii, 22. The sufferings and the death of Christ were the greatest stumbling-blocks in the way of the worldly and prejudiced Jews (who were looking for a mighty and invincible temporal prince) to the reception of the humble, meek, suffering, and dying Lamb of God. They could not conceive of the Son of God being overcome by his enemies and delivered up to death; thus they cried out to him when he was crucified, "Let Christ, the king of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we *may see and believe*;"—"He saved others, *himself he cannot save*." The object of the apostle is, to assure them that all this was a part of his mission; that none of these things were unexpected; that for this very purpose the Son of God came into the world—to suffer and die, the just for the unjust. "The apostle here," says Mr. Wesley, "anticipates an objection: Why did God suffer such a person to be so treated? Did he not know what wicked men intended to do; and had he not power to prevent it? Yea, he knew all that those wicked men intended to do, and he had power to blast all their designs in a moment. But he did not exert that power because he 'so loved the world'; because it was 'the determined counsel' of his love to redeem mankind from eternal death, by the death of his only-begotten Son." *And foreknowledge of God]* This is that faculty of the almighty mind by which he has a perfect knowledge of all coming events. God knew that such would be the sufferings of his Son; that he would be rejected by the Jews, betrayed by his apostle, delivered up by the council, and hurried to death by the multitude. There was no unforeseen occurrence, no disappointment, in reference to the reception of Christ upon the earth; it was all known in the counsels of heaven. Christ himself foresaw it when he came

knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

to do the will of his Father. *And by wicked hands have crucified and slain]* Now the apostle charges the guilt of this transaction upon themselves. Having proved that the death of Christ, so far from militating against his Messiahship, was an essential and intended part of it, he now dislodges them from any hiding place beneath the divine counsel and will of God, and fastens upon them the stain of the cruel and bloody event. They, as their own consciences testified, had acted voluntarily in the whole matter. They had followed the bent of their own blinded and inflamed passions, by no means intending to accomplish the divine intention, but, if possible, to subvert it; but in thus doing they had actually, and of their own accord, accomplished the merciful purpose of God. Thus was their guilt unmitigated. There was no compelling force, but their own unsanctified wills led them to these deeds. Without any intention of accomplishing good, they had wrought a most horrible crime, and their souls were now stained with blood. Some have rendered the words translated *by wicked hands*, “*by the hands of sinners*;” that is, the Gentiles, referring to the Romans, who were the immediate executioners of Christ; but the common acceptation of the passage seems preferable. The crucifixion might have been permitted by the Roman governor, and accomplished by the Roman executioner; but it was at the unappeased importunity of the Jews. He washed his hands of the crime, while they cried out, “*His blood be upon us and upon our children.*” “The purpose or decree of God, respecting any conduct of men, does not destroy their free agency and accountability in regard to that conduct; for it is an element in human nature that men act according to their own choice. They are at liberty, so far as the Creator’s interference with their power of choice is concerned, to act or not to act; and when, in their actions, they do what God has predicted or purposed, they do it because they choose to do it. They feel that, in their daily course of conduct, they are acting or are not acting, both as to ordinary matters and as to their spiritual concerns, according to their own choice; not compelled by any external power which they cannot resist. Whether the action they perform is good or bad, it is a voluntary one. Wherever a *moral* quality belongs to the conduct, so that it may be denominated *right* or *wrong*, men may act or not act, or do something else if they choose.” This is illustrated by the case of the king of Assyria, who, while fulfilling God’s purpose, had no intention of it himself. God intended him as a scourge of his people, but he followed his own ambitious inclinations.

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

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24. *Whom God hath raised up]* The same divine purpose that decreed his death, purposed and accomplished his resurrection. This great event must remove from their minds every possible idea of weakness and unworthiness arising from his sufferings and death. Had he been an impostor, the grave would not have given him up until the judgment day, when he should receive the deserts of his sins. His resurrection clearly proved his Messiahship. *Having loosed the pains of death]* Some suppose that reference is had in this expression to the penal agonies that preceded the death of our Lord, when he was "exceedingly sorrowful," and when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" from which the Father finally loosed him, when, at his death, he said, "It is finished." Most commentators are of the opinion, that the Greek word translated *pains* should be translated *bonds*; and that reference is had to the situation of the dead, and of Christ in the grave, as if bound down under the chains of death, and restrained from rising again to life. In the resurrection of Christ God loosed, dissolved these bonds, and let the captive of death go free. Dr. Bloomfield, however, defends the common rendering, and substitutes *removed* for *loosed*—he removed the power of death over him; the term *pains of death* meaning simply death itself, connected as it is, in the minds of most, with ideas of terror and sorrow. *Because it was not possible that he should be holden of it]* "Inasmuch as He had life in himself, (John v, 26,) and was the 'Prince of life.'" The word translated *impossible* Scott explains as "impossible consistently with the dignity of his person, the nature of his undertaking, the perfecting of his work, the purpose of God, and the predictions of Scripture."

25. *For David speaketh concerning him]* With reference to him, that is, Christ. The prophecy of David referring to the resurrection of our Lord, that Peter now quotes, is contained in Psalm xvi, 8-11. Commentators hold different opinions concerning this Psalm, as to whether it referred wholly to our Lord, or had a primary reference to David. Inspiration, however, by the pen of St. Luke, settles its proper application upon Christ, even if it first applied to David. The former application of it, (to Christ,) says Bloomfield, "if secondary in *order*, is primary in *importance*. It should seem that David spoke

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad ; moreover also, my flesh shall rest in hope :

in the person of the Messiah." *I foresaw the Lord always before my face*] The signification of the word translated foresaw, is, "to be so mindful of as to set always before us ;" implying such strong and abiding faith and affection in him, as to secure a continual sense of his presence. A state of mind is this most worthy of imitation. It will secure sincere humility, a proper spirit of dependency, a watchful walk, a calm and delightful repose upon the Almighty arm, and grace for every hour of need. *For he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved*] He is my supporter—defender. The language is significant of his *nearness* to God ; he was at *hand*, ready every moment to support him. It also expresses David's high regard for the Lord, the right hand being the place of honor : he exalted his Defender, and magnified his mercy. *That I should not be moved*] Agitated, distressed—be not overwhelmed by danger, appalled by calamity, or overcome by temptation. Says the Psalmist in another place, "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever." "He only is my rock and my salvation ; he is my defense ; I shall not be greatly moved." Psalm exxv, 1 ; lxii, 2.

26. *Therefore did my heart rejoice*] A similar expression to, *therefore did I rejoice*—the heart, as the seat of the affections and emotions, being substituted in the place of the whole man. The Psalmist and the Saviour, here speaking for themselves, rejoiced in the immediate presence and continued support of God. *And my tongue was glad*] In the Hebrew psalm it is written, "My *glory* rejoiceth." The Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament Scriptures, which was used by the apostles and the Jews generally, translating it, "My tongue." The idea is much the same in both cases, namely, that of lively hope, exalted honor, *extreme joy*, either heartfelt or expressed. *Moreover, also, my flesh shall rest in hope*] Expressive of the highest confidence in a glorious resurrection, *my flesh*—my body—*shall rest*—shall repose, shall sleep—not be dissipated or corrupted ; *in hope*, in desire, and certain expectation of again arising. The language is expressive of *certainty* rather than *possibility*; of expectation rather than hope. This is the language of Christ in reference to himself; but how true of the Christian. He *falls asleep* in Jesus ; his dust, unlike his Saviour's, may mingle with the earth, or be dissolved in the waters ; but he gives his body to its grave in confident expectation of a coming day, when corruption shall put on incorruption, and mortal immortality.

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.

27. *Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell]* In *hades*—the state of separate spirits—the state of the dead, as distinguished from that of the living—the invisible world. But it does not appear that ever our Lord went into hell. His soul, when it was separated from the body, did not go thither, but to paradise. Luke xxiii, 43. The meaning is, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in its separate state.”—WESLEY. “The Greek word *hades* corresponds with the Hebrew *sheol*, which latter word, in Gcn. xxxvii, 35; xlii, 38, is rendered, in our version, ‘grave,’ but in other passages, as in Isa. xiv, 9; Jer. v, 14; Job xxvi, 6, ‘hell.’ This place the Hebrews thought to be a scene of thick darkness, (Job x, 21, 22,) where the spirits of those that departed this life had an existence devoid of thought and sensation. In it are valleys (Prov. ix, 18) and gates, Isa. xxxviii, 10; and the wicked descend to it, while yet alive, by the openings of the earth. Num. xvi, 20–33. The etymology is uncertain; various opinions have been offered: but they are all unsatisfactory.

“Both *sheol*, in the Old, and *hades*, in the New Testament, are frequently employed to express the state of the dead in its most comprehensive point of view, including the grave as the invisible residence of the body, and the world of spirits as the invisible abode of the soul; but at other times they are used either of the one or the other taken separately. *Sheol* is often improperly rendered ‘hell’ in our version, the instances being comparatively few in which the word has the accessory signification of the place of punishment. That the Hebrews understood something beyond the grave, by the term *sheol*, is evident from the circumstance that the usual name for the interment of the human body is *keber*. It was in *sheol* that the aged patriarch Jacob expected to meet his deceased son, (Genesis xxxix, 35,) into which the fathers had entered, and whither their posterity were removed at death, to join their society. Gen. xxv, 8; xxxv, 29; xl ix, 29; Deut. xxxii, 50. In all these passages the being ‘gathered to one’s people,’ is spoken of as something distinct from mere burial; and, indeed, in the cases of Abraham and Moses, it is obvious that in such a sense no phrase can be more incongruous, since the former had no people in the cave of Machpelah, Sarah being the only individual who had as yet been buried in it; and of the grave of the latter, the children of Israel were profoundly ignorant. It has been remarked that *hades*, and its corresponding Hebrew word *shkol*, are always singular, in meaning, as well as in form, while the word *keber* (grave, tomb) is often given in the plural. The

28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

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former never admit the possessive pronouns, being the receptacle of all the dead, and, therefore, incapable of appropriation to individuals; the latter frequently does."—*Bib. Cyclopaedia*. This being the usual meaning of the term, namely, a dark, unknown existence, into which spirits entered after death, it might with propriety, at times, be applied to the situation of the wicked dead, in particular before the judgment, and be invested with fearful terrors, as at other times referred also to the righteous as a scene of happy reunion with the departed, as in Psa. ix, 17, "The wicked shall be turned into hell." Prov. xxiii, 14, "Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell," while Abraham and Moses are "gathered to their fathers" in this state. The meaning here is simply, a state of separate being from the living—thou wilt not leave me among the dead, in the world of spirits. "It is from this passage, and, perhaps, aided by two others, (Rom. x, 7, and 1 Pet. iii, 19,) that the doctrine originated, that Christ 'descended,' as it is expressed in the creed, '*into hell;*' and many have invented strange opinions about his going among the lost spirits. The doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church has been, that he went to *purgatory* to deliver the spirits confined there. But if the interpretation now given be correct, then it will follow, 1. That nothing is affirmed here about the human *soul* of Christ after his death. That he went to the regions of the dead is implied, but nothing further. 2. It may be remarked that the Scriptures affirm nothing about the state of his *soul* in that time which intervened between his death and resurrection. The only intimation which occurs on the subject is such as to leave us to suppose that he was in a state of happiness. To the dying thief Jesus said, '*This day* shalt thou be with me in paradise.' Luke xxiii, 43.—When Jesus died, he said, 'It is finished;' and he doubtless meant by that, that his sufferings and toils for man's redemption were at an end."—BARNES. *Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption*] Jesus, the Messiah, expressive of the close and tender relation existing between him and the Father, *thine* Holy One. This latter term may well apply to the Saviour; he was conceived of the Holy Ghost, he was as a lamb without spot or blemish, guile was not found in his lip. Heb. vii, 26. *To see corruption*] To suffer corruption. That is, thou wilt not permit my body to remain sufficiently long in the grave to corrupt or dissolve.

28. *Thou hast made known to me the ways of life*] "Thou hast made known, that is, opened to me the paths of life, that is, the means of

29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

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avoiding permanent death, and of attaining unto life."—BLOOMFIELD. As referring to the Saviour, simply meaning, thou wilt restore me to life. As used by the Psalmist in reference to his views of the future, it may signify, Thou hast opened before me the path to everlasting life, to endless happiness; life being often used to express a state of bliss—I shall not slumber in the grave, but still live. *Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance]* Expressive of the fullness of joy which he anticipated as his portion when he should have finished his sacrifice, and sat down at the right hand of God. "Who, for the joy that was set before him," says the apostle, "endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Heb. xii, 2.

29. Having finished his quotation from the Psalms, he now proceeds to apply it to Christ, anticipating and answering the objection, namely: David had reference to himself in these words, and not to another. Peter immediately exhibits the impossibility of a literal application to him, while it was evidently true of Jesus. *Men and brethren]* A most respectful form of salutation. The object of the apostle was to obtain their confidence and candid hearing; and he treats them, however enraged and malicious they might have been when he commenced his address, as men worthy of respect and as friends—and he gained his object. May not a good lesson in reference to the treatment of those who differ from us in opinion, and of all men, be learned from this! *Let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David]* David was a popular and beloved king; and his memory to the Jews was like "ointment poured out." Peter refers to him with especial respect. The term patriarch is not ordinarily used except in reference to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his sons; but as the head or founder of a race of kings, it was applied to David. "Permit me, however," he would say, to refer freely to well-known facts concerning him, although he was thus exalted, and so worthy of honor. He is about to show that this passage did not refer to David, but to another, and to appeal for proof to what might at first seem derogatory to his character. How wisely he prefacess his argument! *He is both dead and buried]* He had manifestly died, and was publicly buried. 1 Kings ii, 10. These were statements no one would question. *His sepulchre is with us unto this day]* An additional and confirmatory fact. There had certainly been no resurrection—his venerable and sacred dust still reposed in the tomb of the kings. His body must,

30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

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therefore, have undergone corruption, and he was himself still in the world of spirits; the application of the Psalm, therefore, could not have been to him. The tomb of David is noticed by Josephus: it would naturally be an object of sacred regard among the Jews; and the tomb of the kings, near Jerusalem, is still pointed out with much probability as the place where David and his royal sons were buried.

30. *Therefore]* As it could not refer to David, the question now is, Whom did David have in his mind when he wrote the passage? This Peter answers. *Being a prophet]* Divinely inspired to predict future events. *God had sworn with an oath to him]* Had solemnly pledged himself to him—had sacredly decreed it. This promise was made to David by the Almighty through Nathan his prophet, and is contained in 2 Sam. vii, 11, 16. To it David refers in Psalm lxxxix, 35–37. *The fruit of his loins, according to the flesh]* His lineal descendants. After the flesh—according to his human nature—Christ was a descendant of David. Why should the clause, “according to the flesh,” be introduced, if Jesus was but a man, and had not a higher nature, divine as well as human? *He would raise up Christ]* David was divinely assured that from his posterity the Messiah, promised to the patriarchs, should be born. Rom. i, 3; Matt. xxii, 41–45. In the Psalm now quoted by the apostle, as well as in others, (Psalms xxii, lxix,) David gives evidence of this expectation on his part, speaking clearly of Christ, and what should befall him. *He would raise up Christ]* So the Jews manifestly expected. The promise to David, though immediately referring to Solomon and his natural descendants, like the promise to the patriarchs, looked forward to a more exalted and spiritual seed; and, as we have seen, David himself thus understood the promise, as being a reiteration of the great promise, first made to faithful Abraham, renewed to Isaac and Jacob, allotted to the royal tribe of Judah, and now narrowed down to the family of David. The lineal descent of kings had been broken up, his reigning sons had ceased, yet the Jews were expecting, from among his descendants, that the long-looked for Messiah would soon be born, who should reign gloriously in Jerusalem. (See Matt. xii, 23; xxi, 9.) *To sit on his throne]* David was king of God’s chosen people; our Lord, the natural descendant of David, became king of spiritual Israel. The government of David in succeeding years, according to the promises, was to be a universal rule, and an

31 He seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

everlasting kingdom. Psa. lxxxix, 35-37; Dan. ii, 44. This could only be accomplished by the spiritual reign of Christ in the hearts of his subjects. In this way did the Messiah succeed David, in that he received the empire of God's people, to reign in them for ever. Thus did the angel assure Mary, when the birth of Christ was announced to her: "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke i, 32, 33. Our Lord assumed his right to the throne of David, though in a different manner from what was expected by the Jews. When before Pilate, and answering his question, "Art thou a king, then?" he said, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Before this he had shown the reason of his rejection by those who were expecting his coming: "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." John xviii, 36, 37.

31. *He]* That is, David. *Seeing this before]* Through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. *Spake of the resurrection of Christ]* Prophesied of it; referred to it, and not to himself, in the Psalm quoted. *His soul was not left in hell]* That is, the soul of the Messiah. (See notes on verse 27.)

32. *This Jesus]* Peter now proceeds to show the particular and perfect application of this prophecy to Jesus Christ. This same person, whom they had wickedly slain, did answer all the points of the prophecy in his death and resurrection. Him God had raised from the dead. *Whereof we all are witnesses]* The whole one hundred and twenty, who all of them undoubtedly had seen and conversed with Jesus, were ready to testify to the fact. Some commentators limit it to the apostles who were the appointed witnesses of this, and one of whose chief offices was to declare the resurrection, Acts i, 22; Luke xxiv, 48; and who were now, perhaps, standing with Peter, and assenting to what he uttered. As, however, it is stated that, on one occasion, five hundred of his disciples at once saw him, (1 Cor. xv, 4-7,) and as he appeared at many different times and different places, it is more than probable that all the disciples present had personally

33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

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seen him since his resurrection. The value of their testimony depended, 1st. On their general probity—this was never disputed. 2d. The number of the persons, and their opportunities of assuring themselves of the reality of the fact—they not only *saw* him, but *heard* him and even touched him. He was with them, and in different places, many days. They saw him in the daytime as well as at night, ate and conversed with him. 3d. From the fact that there was no sufficient reason for dishonesty. They lost everything, in a worldly point of view—property, honor, ease; and even subjected themselves to the most fearful deaths rather than deny what they had stated. The idle story of the soldiers, suggested by the priests, that he was stolen away from the sepulchre, seems to have obtained so little credence, that not one offers it as an objection to the fact stated by Peter.

33. The apostle is now about to appeal to another fact as an attestation of the resurrection of Christ. Having proved that the outpouring of the Spirit, which they were now enjoying, was a prophetic promise connected with the coming and kingdom of Christ, he is prepared now to refer to this as an additional evidence of his resurrection and ascension into heaven, and that he is the true Messiah. *Therefore]* Having proved his resurrection. *Being by the right hand of God exalted]* By the *right hand* of God is meant the power of God. Being exalted, or raised up by the mighty power of God, at his ascension, to sit at his right hand; raised from a state of humiliation to most exalted glory. *Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost]* This effusion, according to Joel, was to mark the introduction of Christ's reign, and this our Lord had promised them when he should ascend to the Father, and had commanded them to wait for it in constant expectation. John xvi, 7; Acts i, 8. This promise, which the Father would fulfill in attestation of his Messiahship, (John xiv, 26; xv, 26,) had been on that day gloriously fulfilled. *He hath shed forth this]* He had poured out this effusion of the Holy Spirit, this miraculous influence. *Which ye now see and hear]* Producing the extraordinary effects which you now observe—the tongues of flame—the power of uttering and understanding foreign languages. All this is now directly traced to the same Jesus whom they had crucified upon the cross, but who was now evidently, from this unquestioned miracle, which prophets had foretold and he himself had promised, at God's right hand in heaven.

34 For David is not ascended into the heavens, but he saith himself, The **LORD** said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

34. "The apostle's argument is this:—That David speaketh concerning the *Messiah* (as cited verse 25 and following) is clear from Psalm x, 1, where he speaks of *a Lord* who was to be at God's right hand till all his enemies were subdued. For that patriarch is not raised up from the dead, and 'ascended into the heavens' to God's right hand; therefore he must have spoken this of some *other* person, namely, of Jesus Christ, 'who had shed forth this which ye now see and hear.'"—**HOLDEN.** *For David is not ascended into the heavens]* He hath not arisen from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God, the final state of exalted glory. His remains are still with us, and his spirit in the invisible world—the separate state. Mr. Ripley, upon this verse, says: "This remark, concerning David's not being ascended into the heavens, is of the same tenor with some other representations of the Scriptures concerning the state of deceased righteous men." He then refers to the fact that the details of another world are not so minute as curiosity would desire, but sufficiently so to serve as warnings and incitements to present duty. He infers, however, from brief Scriptural hints, "a difference between the state of the righteous *after* the resurrection, and the state in which they are during the period between their death and the resurrection. This may, perhaps, be illustrated by the case of our Saviour. While he was on the cross, he said to the penitent robber, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' Luke xxiii, 43. 'The soul of Jesus, then, and that of the penitent robber, went, immediately after death, to paradise—a holy and happy state; but, after Jesus was risen from the dead, he said to Mary, 'I am not yet ascended to my Father.' John xx, 17. A distinction seems to be made between the state to which he went immediately after death, and the state to which he was going after his resurrection." This period is sometimes styled, to distinguish it, a *separate state*, from the separate existence of the soul while the body slumbers in the grave; and the *intermediate state*, as intervening between death and the resurrection. It must be, however, a state of actual bliss to the righteous, and of misery to the wicked. "It is to the righteous far superior to the earthly state, as their holiness is rendered complete and abiding, the seal is put upon their acceptance with God, and they have a fuller and a special enjoyment of the Saviour's presence." This is evident from the language of the apostle in 2 Cor. v, 6, 8: "While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." "We are willing rather to be absent from the body,

35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that

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and to be present with the Lord." This may also be inferred from our Lord's language, John xiv, 2, 3: "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." "The state, then, on which the righteous enter at death is eminently a blessed state, to be in which, enjoying the presence of Christ, and associating with the spirits of just men made perfect, is far better than to be on earth, Phil. i, 23; yet it is inferior to that consummation of bliss and glory which awaits the righteous at the resurrection of the body, and subsequently to the day of judgment. From this intermediate state the righteous are to come forth, at the resurrection, to assume their spiritual bodies, and to be admitted to the still higher and happier state, that may appropriately be called the heaven of endless and supreme glory; and the wicked assume their bodies, and be consigned to their endless condition of wo."—RIPLEY. David had not yet left this state. Our Lord remained here a short time, but returned from it and ascended to the throne of God. *But he saith himself]* As recorded in the 110th Psalm, 1st verse. *The Lord]* The original Hebrew word is Jehovah, the name peculiarly appropriated to Almighty God, and for which the Jews had so much reverence that they never pronounced it; but when they met it in reading the Scriptures they would use another appellation to express it—*Adoni*, Lord. When the term Jehovah is thus translated in our Bible, as in this case, small capitals are used. *To my Lord]* This is *Adoni*, Lord, a term used by a servant when addressing his master, or a subject his king, and signifying respect, reverence, submission. Christ is referred to by this title. Although a natural descendant of David, he calls him by this reverent title: "Jehovah says to him, whom I regard as Lord and Master," &c. *Sit thou on my right hand]* To be seated on the right hand is indicative of the highest honor.

35. *Until I make thy foes thy footstool]* Allusion, in both of these last sentences, is had to the ancient custom of kings honoring deserving merit by seating the person upon their right hand, and expressing their triumph over their enemies by placing their feet upon their necks. This quotation from David, although repeated for another purpose, could not but have assured them of their certain destruction if they continued to be the enemies of the Son of David.

36. Here the apostle draws his argument to a most pointed and cutting conclusion. *Therefore]* In view of these unanswerable facts. *Let all the house of Israel]* All the Jewish nation. *Know assuredly]*

God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every

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Be perfectly convinced. There can be no reasonable doubt. *God hath made*] Hath constituted—appointed. *That same Jesus*] The identical one; the very same person who suffered at your hand. *Both Lord and Christ*] Both Master, King, Ruler, and Messiah, the appointed Redeemer of Israel: the very King and glorious Saviour they had been long expecting, and whom, through their blindness and wickedness, they had rejected and slain.

37. *Now when they heard this*] When they heard this solemn declaration, in connection with the overwhelming proof of the apostle's correctness. *They were pricked in their hearts*] “Were pierced at the heart.” “The term signifies *to be pricked through*, and is used in reference to the emotions of violent grief or remorse, whether *expressed* in words or *silent*.”—BLOOMFIELD. They were deeply convicted of guilt in the act they had done, and in their continued rejection of him—moved by fear of the threatened danger, and melted into contrite sorrow in view of the sufferings of Jesus, which they had caused. *Men and brethren*] Their views of the apostles have greatly changed. The mocker and blasphemer is changed to the broken-hearted inquirer—the lion has become a lamb. They desire now, on their part, to propitiate the favor, and obtain the interest, of these followers of Jesus whom they had persecuted, hoping, perhaps, that their offenses may be pardoned through their intercessions. *What shall we do?*] We acknowledge our sin. We are convinced that Jesus is the Messiah—the threatenings of God are impending over us. What can we do? How appropriate the cry! How natural in the lips of the convicted sinner!

38. *Repent*] Thus did the apostle fulfill the instructions of our Lord just before his ascension, “that repentance and the remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*.” They were now convicted of their sins, and the apostle directs them to a work which is to be immediately attended to—a sincere sorrow for their past conduct, and a breaking off from all their sinful courses. Scriptural repentance implies a deep and lasting sorrow on account of sin, a just sense of its demerit and heinousness, and a solemn and prayerful determination to cease from every sinful act and live a life of holiness, accompanied with an humble reliance upon the merciful promises of God in Christ Jesus for forgiveness.

one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

1. This definition of repentance distinguishes it from mere conviction. Many are roused by the Holy Spirit, or some divine providence, to a sense of their situation, are made conscious of their sins, and tremble in view of the consequences that must follow. They cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" but still continue in the same forbidden practices—do not stop to hear or follow the directions of the Bible.

2. It distinguishes it from the terror of a guilty conscience, produced by the fear of immediate death. Bold and blaspheming sinners oftentimes, in an hour of extreme peril, perhaps on shipboard, in view of immediate shipwreck and a watery grave, cry out in terrible agony, "What shall I do to be saved?" but when the danger is over, laugh at their former fears. They did not repent of their sins—had no adequate idea of their sinfulness, no real sorrow for them—still loved sin, but awfully feared hell and the consequences of their crimes—and when the pressure of this fear was removed, relapsed into their sins again. Are not *many death-bed scenes of repentance* of this nature?

3. It distinguishes it from presumption. Because God is merciful, and has prepared so wondrous a scheme of redemption, many conclude that their sins will be overlooked; that punishment will not be visited upon them; that repentance consists in leaving off the more open transgressions of God's law; and that, for lesser matters, God will not hold them strictly accountable. There is no deep, godly sorrow that needeth not to be repented of here, producing meet fruits of repentance. They presume, without reason, upon the very mercy to which they are continually doing despite, and upon which they are ever trampling.

4. From merely sentimental repentance. Many talk of their sins, and are very free in acknowledging them. "Who is without his faults?" say they; and "they do not hope to be better than their neighbors." They may sometimes even shed tears over their past conduct, and say many bitter things against themselves, and even make very many resolutions to reform, but there the matter ends. The reformation may last a few days, and then their tears are dried. It may be, in a period of general religious interest, they are moved by the solicitude of others, and sympathize with the prevailing spirit of penitence manifested around them—shedding tears, and commencing to seek Christ; but these have no thorough view of the depravity of their own hearts, no idea of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; they know

not what it is to be heart-broken and overwhelmed, in view of their ingratitude and the long forbearance of God. There is no sincere hatred to sin; no thorough reformation of habits, manners, and thoughts. There is not much depth of earth here, and the plant of grace soon withers away.

5. Finally, this definition distinguishes true repentance from despair. Heart-broken, the true penitent still trusts in the divine word. Judas was conscious of sin, and overwhelmed by it; but he dared not hope for forgiveness—he did not look to his betrayed Saviour for pardon—he despaired and died. The truly contrite, even while he cries out, with many tears and prayers, from a broken heart, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” at the same time believes that he “is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse from unrighteousness.” My friend, now reading this page, have you thus sincerely repented of your sin, and trusted in Christ for pardon?

*Be baptized every one of you]* It was also Christ’s final command to his disciples that they should go “and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” This was to be the external badge of their admission into the church. By receiving baptism, they expressed their full belief in the Messiahship of Christ, and their submission to his gospel. The apostle thus exhorts them to repentance, and public acknowledgment of the change of their views and feelings, by the reception of the rite Christ had established. This is still binding upon all—a secret allegiance to the Saviour is not sufficient; and while the rite itself is not immediately connected with the salvation of the soul, nor indispensable to true faith, yet it may not be willfully neglected, nor a public profession of religion, and a union with the visible church, without periling the highest interests of the soul. “For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.” Luke ix, 26. Baptism is the application of water, by a proper administrator, according to the institution of Christ, and is significant of our need of purification, and emblematic of the office of the Holy Spirit, who alone can cleanse the heart. (See Longking’s Notes, vol. i, pp. 162, 198; iv, p. 504. See also Hibbard on Baptism, published at the Book Room.) *In the name of Jesus Christ]* Thus acknowledging yourselves to be his servants. In this way publicly take upon yourselves the profession of his gospel, and thus consecrate yourselves to his service. *For the remission of sins]* Of all their sins, as well as for the rejection of Christ. Remission is the release or discharge from a debt, or the penalty of a crime: it also signifies pardon, forgiveness. All need this, for all are deeply in debt, and

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

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*havenothing to pay*;—have sinned, and cannot make atonement. There was nothing in baptism itself that could remit or wash away their sins—nothing but the divine mercy, through Christ, can accomplish this; but by baptism these persons would express their willingness to accede to the terms of salvation by faith in Jesus, their reliance upon his power and promise, and their intended obedience to all his commands. *Every one*] Must attend to this for himself; the piety of the parents will not save the children, nor that of the children the parents. It is a personal matter between Almighty God and our own souls. How stands that great account? *And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*] This does not here mean the power of working miracles, of speaking with tongues, for this was not bestowed upon all *that were afar off*, in different ages and nations; but rather the constant fruits of faith, even righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

39. *For the promise*] Their hearts being now broken, and prepared for encouragement, the apostle calls their attention again to the promise of God, before referred to, by his servant Joel. *It is unto you*] Although you have crucified the Messiah, still, as Jews, the promise is especially directed to you. *And to your children*] The Spirit, according to Joel, was to be poured out upon their sons and upon their daughters. The blessing conferred upon Abraham was extended to his seed, and here the new covenant is made to embrace the succeeding generations in its bosom. Although this particular promise may not refer to children, as children, but rather to his descendants, and therefore may not be used as an argument in defense of infant baptism, (there being many others more definite and satisfactory,) still it must serve as an encouragement to parents and friends of the young to carefully train them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In our day, especially in the sabbath schools, the Holy Spirit has been eminently poured out upon our sons and daughters, giving signal tokens of God's approbation of these nurseries of the church, and preparing many faithful laborers in the vineyard of the Lord. *To all that are afar off*] "All men everywhere." Peter himself probably did not understand the full force of the promise. His Jewish prejudices were not entirely destroyed. He might have supposed it referred to the scattered Jews among all nations, or that Gentile nations would become Jewish proselytes. Peter, however, soon understood the unrestricted nature of the promise. Acts x, 34, 35. *Even as many as the Lord our God shall call*] All whom God in his providence, by his preached word, and Spirit, shall call to repentance and

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

41 Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

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faith in Christ, and who shall obey the heavenly calling. God has sent this word to every nation and every creature, by an instrumentality that he has appointed. It is our fault, and not the Lord's, that all have not heard the good news and glad tidings of salvation.

40. *Many other words]* What is recorded of the sermon is probably only the outline—the course of the argument, which he closes by many tender and moving exhortations, and which, as not necessary for the full understanding of the history, the inspired penman omits. *Testify]* “Did he earnestly charge.” He bore witness to the important truth he had discussed, accumulated testimony. *Exhort]* To impress, to beseech, to implore. He pressed upon them the conclusions he had reached in his discourse. *Save yourselves from this untoward generation]* Suffer yourselves to be saved, the only way of escape is opened. Escape for your lives—separate, withdraw yourselves from the evil influences and multitude that surround you—leave them, if they will not come with you, to their certain destruction, but save your own souls. *Untoward generation]* The word signifies *perverse* and *wicked*, by a metaphor taken from what is *crooked*, as opposed to *straight*. Wicked and perverse, to an awful degree, had the Jews now become; their cup of iniquity was almost full.

Thus must we, if we would be saved, separate ourselves from sinners—leave our nearest friends behind, if need be, and follow Christ, personally and alone, if required, with decision and constancy; and, by thus doing, we shall be far more likely to save our friends also, than by an undecided and compromising course.

41. *Gladly received]* Those that cheerfully submitted to the answer given by Peter to the question: “What shall we do?” *His word]* His teaching—instruction. *Were baptized]* Received the solemn rite at the hands of the apostles. The terms employed by Luke, in recording this event, carry the idea that they were all baptized at once, on the same day. Their conviction was instantaneous, their repentance immediate and sincere, their faith in Christ established, and who could forbid water that these should not be baptized? *And the same day]* In reference to the fact of this baptism transpiring at once, Mr. Barnes remarks:—“The discourse of Peter commenced at nine o’clock in the morning. Verse 15. How long it continued, it is not said; but the ceremony of admitting them to the church,

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

and of baptizing them, was evidently performed on the same day. The mode in which this is done is not mentioned; but it is highly improbable that *in the midst of the city of Jerusalem three thousand persons were wholly immersed in one day.* The whole narrative supposes that it was all done *in the city;* and yet there is no probability that there were conveniences there for *immersing* so many in a single day. Besides, in the ordinary way of administering baptism by immersion, it is difficult to conceive that *so many persons* could have been immersed in so short a time. There is, indeed, here no positive *proof* that they were not immersed; but the narrative is one of those incidental circumstances, often much more satisfactory than philosophical discussion, that show the extreme improbability that all this was done by wholly immersing them in the water." *Were added]* To the one hundred and twenty. What a glorious addition for one day and one sermon! O for the power of the Holy Ghost to descend again upon the church! *Souls]* A common expression for *persons.*

42. *Continued steadfastly]* "They were intently engaged." None of them apostatized. They remained firm; and in spite of all entreaty, threats, or persecutions, held fast to the profession they had publicly made at their baptism. *In the apostles' doctrine]* In the instructions and truths they had received from the apostles. *And fellowship]* In the society of the apostles, the early church having perhaps already organized itself. They were united outwardly and spiritually; they had made a public profession, and were, besides, joined in sympathy and warm affection in a closer bond of union, so that their enemies might well say of them, "See how these Christians love one another!" *Breaking of bread]* Some suppose this to refer to the celebration of the Lord's supper, but it cannot be definitely determined. Dr. Bloomfield supposes it to refer to religious meals that they all partook in common—"a common participation of meals, taken in charitable communion and religious thankfulness, and followed by prayer;" and this he thinks confirmed by verse 46. Perhaps from these meals the first idea of the agapæ or *love-feasts* was suggested, and afterward introduced into the Christian church. The bread of the Jews being thin and hard, from the necessity of spreading it over the sides of the earthen oven to bake it, would be brittle, and could not have been easily cut. But the master of the feast, or head of the family, first broke the bread before it was distributed. *In prayers]* Where the Holy Spirit is, and a sound conversion, there will be a love for prayer:—

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

“ Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,  
The Christian’s native air;  
His passport at the gate of death,  
He enters heaven by prayer.”

The early Christians were well employed,—

1. Hearing the word; 2. Sharing their substance; 3. Expressing their affection in pious meals, or at the table of the Lord; and, 4. In constant prayer.

“ Ye diff’rent sects who all declare,  
Lo! here is Christ, and Christ is there!  
Your stronger proofs divinely give,  
And show me where the Christians *live!*”

43. *Fear came upon every soul]* Wonder, amazement, and terror, settled upon the multitude. They had heard, and some had seen, the great miracles that occurred on the day of Pentecost; the sermon of Peter, rehearsing the terrible denunciations of the Lord against the rebellious Jews—the proofs of the Messiahship of Christ whom they had crucified—all combined to stun and overpower them. A reverential awe and trembling seized upon them. *Every soul]* Spread generally, affected all classes. *Wonders and signs]* These had been promised by the Saviour. Mark xvi, 17. Extraordinary cures, indisputable miracles, wonderful acts, the apostles, by the Holy Spirit, were enabled to perform in the name of Christ.

44. *And all that believed were together]* All that received Christ as the true Messiah, and their Saviour personally, were often together for social worship and consultation upon matters interesting to the young church. It does not mean that the whole three thousand lived in common, or continued meeting daily in the same place to worship, but that they formed a distinct society among themselves, and were united, meeting together in different bands, in the various parts of the city, and often conferring with each other. *And had all things common]* In Jerusalem, during the feast, all the houses were thrown open to accommodate strangers, Jews from abroad; nothing was charged, but all was free. The effect of grace upon the heart prompted the early Christians to acts of charity more noble even than this common custom recognized. As there was an unusual number of strangers in Jerusalem, who had tarried until Pentecost, and who now, having been converted to Christ, and bound by the

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

tenderest ties to his church, still lingered within the Holy City, and desired to remain there; the disciples, many of them voluntarily, who had property in the vicinity, sold portions or the whole of it, and gave the proceeds to be distributed among the necessitous cases, especially among the strangers now in Jerusalem. Says Dr. Bloomfield:—“Some of the rich sold their property in order to have more to give immediately to their poorer brethren; but the money accruing from thence did not cease to be at their own disposal. This is plain from Acts iv, 32; v, 4; xii, 12. That *all* did not sell their property, is evident from the fact that there were soon afterward rich and poor among the Christians. (See Acts ix, 36; xi, 29; xx, 35; 1 Cor. xvi, 1.) This intercommunity of goods was probably very limited; the sale of property for distribution being far from general, and the distribution itself varying, though the rich, we must suppose for the most part, (influenced by the admonitions of our Lord, as enforced by the apostles,) regarded their wealth as held in trust for their fellow-Christians. It is plain that this intercommunity of goods was voluntary, limited in operation, and produced by the peculiar circumstances of the infant church at Jerusalem, composed, as it was, in a great measure, of *foreign Jews* sojourning there, and detained by their natural wish of acquiring a thorough knowledge of that religion which they had adopted, and yet whose funds might, by their detention so much longer than they expected, have fallen short, and thrown them on the charitable assistance of their richer brethren. As to the *native Jews*, the *poorer* converts were peculiarly objects of consideration to their richer brethren, since all charity from those who adhered to the Jewish religion would be denied them, and they would have scrupled to partake of the relics of the *temple sacrifices*, (which were distributed among the poor.) Nay, their means of supporting themselves might occasionally be taken from them by bigoted employers or customers. Under these circumstances, no relief could be expected except from their Christian brethren.” There is no evidence that a community of goods was ever enjoined by the apostles or practiced by the early Christians. The above was an act of voluntary charity, prompted by the religion of Jesus, and occasioned by the peculiar exigencies of the newly formed church.

45. *Sold their possessions, &c.]* As far as was necessary. “The passage does not mean that they sold *all* their possessions, or that they relinquished their title to all their property; but that they so far regarded all as common as to be willing to part with it *if* it was need-

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And

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ful to supply the wants of others."—BARNES. *Parted them to all men]* Distributed among all their poorer brethren as far, and as far only, as their necessities required.

46. *Continuing daily]* At their, stated hours. *With one accord]* In delightful and pious harmony. *In the temple]* It was the custom of the Jewish Christians, while Jerusalem stood, to attend at the regular hours of prayer in the temple, at nine A. M. and three P. M. Acts iii, 1. *Breaking bread from house to house]* (See the note on verse 42.) Mr. Wesley supposes it to have reference to the Lord's supper, and renders the passage, "Continuing daily in the Lord's supper, as did many of the churches for some ages." *Did eat their meat]* This seems to confirm the idea that pious, social meals are referred to in the preceding verse—*eat their food*—partook their meals. *With gladness and singleness of heart]* A beautiful evidence of their sincerity and deep piety. Whether they ate or drank, they did all to the glory of God. They acknowledged, with pious joy, the goodness of God in all the creatures given, and ate not as the glutton or the epicure to pamper, but to satisfy appetite. "They carried the same happy, holy temper, through all their common actions; eating and working with the same spirit wherewith they prayed and received the Lord's supper."—WESLEY.

47. *Praising God]* Giving him thanks, as the Source of all good, for every blessing. Rejoicing in the communications of his Spirit. Speaking of his divine power. *Having favor with all the people]* This does not mean with every class in Jerusalem, as it could not be true of the rulers, the priests, and their party. But with the multitude—with the common people, by their benevolent and pious lives, the simplicity and singleness of their habits and characters, they obtained a good reputation, and silenced all calumnies and slanderous reports. Sincere and unaffected piety will always command respect and attention, even on the part of opposers. *And the Lord added]* God works by human instrumentalities, but his blessing alone can give success. To make useful members of his church, they must be united or brought into the church by the convicting and cementing power of God. Human eloquence may attract and charm its hearers, but the Holy Spirit only can fill the sanctuary with the *saved*. *Daily]* There was a continued revival. They carried their piety with them about their daily concerns, and were personally zealous, and

the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

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that continually, to win souls to Christ, and by this means souls were daily saved. *Such as should be saved]* Mr. Wesley translates it, and undoubtedly correctly, "Such as were saved;" and adds, in his comment, "from their sins; from the guilt and power of them." That is, only pious men and women, such only as were soundly converted—who had not only the form of piety, but its life and power, did God, in his providence, permit to be connected, at this time, with his church. As Dr. Clarke says, "The church of Christ was made up of *saints*, *sinners* were not permitted to incorporate themselves with it."

Thus we end a most deeply interesting chapter; describing the foundation of the Christian church, a grand era in ecclesiastical history. The first event is a notable and glorious revival. An exhibition of the infinite power of the instrumentalities of Christianity, if sanctified by the Holy Spirit, is thus given. The same Spirit is still operating; a corresponding prayerfulness, faith, simplicity, and piety, may now secure the same gracious influences, with the exception of the miraculous gifts, which are now not needed—the printing press being, in fact, a lasting *gift of tongues*. Let us join in united prayer for the general and powerful outpouring of the Spirit!

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### CHAPTER III.

1. Peter preacheth to the people that came to see a lame man restored to his feet, and declares the cure not to have been wrought by his or John's own power or holiness, but by God, and his Son Jesus, and through faith in his name; 12. Whom he accuses them of having crucified. 13. He exhorts them, by repentance and faith, to seek remission of their sins, and salvation in the same Jesus, whom all the prophets had foretold.

NOW Peter and John went up together into the temple, at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth hour.

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1. *Peter and John went up together into the temple]* As was remarked in the comments upon the forty-sixth verse, the apostles and Jewish converts, while they remained in Jerusalem, usually attended upon the devotions of the temple at the regular hours. This course was expedient at this time, as by this means the followers of Christ would show the connection between the old and the new dispensation, and that they were no less sincere and pious Jews since they had become disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. It also brought them in contact with

the largest number and most devoted of their countrymen, and thus gave them an opportunity of meeting their objections to the Messiah, preaching repentance and the remission of sins in his name, and of publicly sustaining their mission by miracles openly performed in the presence of the multitude. They trusted not in the forms and ceremonies of the temple, but in the glorious Being signified by all the sacred symbols of the Jewish ritual. This visible piety, and respect for the Mosaic law, could not but produce a favorable impression upon the minds of many toward the apostles. *Into the temple]* Into the *court of the temple*, where the Jews worshiped. (See Longking's Notes, vol. i, p. 50.) *At the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour]* About three in the afternoon. Upon the division of time among the Jews, the editor of the English Pictorial Bible remarks: "The division of the day into hours was the same which still prevails in the East, and which differs very seriously from our own. We, by counting from points at all times fixed, namely, twelve hours from midnight to noon, and twelve from noon to midnight, obtain hours, both of day and night, of equal length at all times of the year, and under the constant variations which occur in the length of the day and night, as the seasons advance and recede. But the Jews did not apply the division by hours to the *night*; and the *day*, which they did subject to the division into twelve hours, was not calculated from any fixed point, but was the natural and changeable day, embracing the time between the rising and the setting of the sun. Thus their *first* hour began at sunrise, and their *twelfth* hour ended at sunset; but as this day is constantly varying its duration, it necessarily follows that the 'hours,' or twelfth parts thereof, were, from day to day, of unequal length, as the days grew longer or shorter. Hence it is that the modern Orientals can derive but partial benefit from our watches, which are adapted to a fixed division of time; and they soon spoil the best watches by continual rectification. In loose references, we say that, according to this computation, the third hour answers to our ninth, the sixth to our twelfth, and the ninth to our third, afternoon. And this may suffice for popular purposes, but it is only true at the season of the equinox. At other seasons of the year it is necessary to observe the time when the sun rises, and reduce the hours to our time accordingly. The *third* hour was, properly, the middle portion of time between sunrise and noon; and the *ninth* hour the middle between noon and sunset. The sun, at the summer solstice, in Palestine, rises at five of our time and sets about seven, and then, consequently, the third hour was half an hour after eight; and at the winter solstice, when the sun rises about seven and sets about five, the third hour was, of course, half an hour after nine; and so on of other hours and other times of the year." From various Scrip-

2 And a certain man, lame from his mother's womb, was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple ;

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ture references, such as Dan. vi, 10; Psa. lv, 17, we learn that there were, among the Jews, three stated hours of prayer: in the morning about nine, or the third hour; at noon, the sixth hour; and at about three in the afternoon, or the ninth hour. Upon this custom Dr. Clarke remarks, with much propriety: "I should be glad to know that every Christian in the universe observed the same rule. It is the most natural division of the day; and he who *conscientiously* observes these *three stated times* of prayer will infallibly grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord."

2. *And a certain man, &c.]* The miracles performed by our Saviour and his disciples were done publicly, and the accounts given of them are full and definite in their statements, rendering any suspicion of deception impossible. This was a well-known case; one which had long excited the sympathy of the Jews worshiping in the temple. It was not a sudden attack of lameness, rendering a speedy cure by the use of ordinary remedies possible; but he had been lame, as they all knew, from his infancy. He was so lame that he could not walk, and was obliged to be carried by his friends to the gate of the temple; and being thus deformed, and poor, and *daily* placed upon his usual seat in the temple court, he must have been a familiar acquaintance with the whole multitude. *Laid daily at the gate of the temple]* The ancients had no alms-houses or hospitals. The poor, the maimed, and the sick, who had no means of support, would seek some conspicuous public resort, where they might attract the notice, and obtain the assistance, of the rich. Sometimes, like blind Bartimeus, they sat by the side of a public highway; sometimes they were laid by their friends, as Lazarus in the parable, at the gate of a wealthy man; but the most common and desirable place, among both the Jews and Gentiles, was at the portals of the temples; the sufferers correctly judging that acts of penitence and devotion to God would best prepare the hearts of the worshipers to sympathize with the sufferings and necessities of their fellow-men. *Which is called Beautiful]* This, probably, is the magnificent structure built by Herod the Great while he was beautifying the temple. According to Josephus, it was made of Corinthian brass, at that time esteemed preferable to either gold or silver; of superior workmanship, covered with thick and rich plates of gold and silver, and fifty cubits high. It was reached by fifteen steps. This superior finish was given to this gate on account of its

3 Who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms.

4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us.

5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

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being that exterior entrance which fronted the entrance to the *holy place*, or the sanctuary; and as it was the gate most frequented by those entering into the temple, we discover the reason of the lame man's being laid at this gate in particular.

3. *Asked an alms]* A gift—solicited charity.

4. *Fastening his eyes upon him]* Looking intently upon him, either to convince himself of the reality of his lameness, or being peculiarly drawn toward him by the power of the Holy Spirit, who was about, through Peter's instrumentality, to work in him a marvelous cure. *Look on us]* He desired to direct the attention of the man to themselves, (Peter and John,) awaken his confidence and faith that something was to be done by them in his behalf, and thus prepare him for the miracle, and turn his mind to the divine Being who thus, through his servants, conferred so great a gift upon him.

5. *Gave heed]* Obeyed Peter—turned his eyes to the apostle and listened attentively. *Expecting to receive something]* Not having the slightest idea of the healing of his lameness, as he had been wont to receive charity, and his attention had been particularly called by the apostles, he probably expected a larger donation of money than usual.

6. *Silver and gold have I none]* With a heart to give even this also if they had it, the apostles give this expressive and touching exhibition of their poverty and of their simple-hearted and genuine benevolence. How unlike is this first Pope Peter, as the Catholics term him, to those who have filled the Papal chair! Dr. Clarke relates that Thomas Aquinas, a very celebrated Roman father, called the *angelical doctor*, and who was highly esteemed by Pope Innocent IV., coming one day into the pope's chamber while large sums of money were being counted over, the pope remarked to him, "You see that the church is no longer in an age in which she can say, *Silver and gold have I none!*" "It is true, holy father," replied Aquinas, "nor can she now say to the lame man, *Rise up and walk!*" A very severe, because justified, rebuke! *But such as I have give I thee]* Peter had something that would be of more value to the lame man than either silver or

7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength.

gold, and this he freely bestowed. He had power, in Christ's name, to heal his lameness. Every Christian, however poor he may be in reference to worldly substance, has something to bestow upon his unconverted friends and neighbors, of infinitely more service to them than silver or gold. He can offer them his Saviour, and point them out the means of obtaining true and enduring riches. *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk]* By the first clause the apostle may have meant, "As an apostle of Jesus Christ, and by his authority, I command you to rise up and walk;" or, "By the power, and in the strength of Jesus Christ, rise up," &c. When the apostles work miracles, they do it in the name of Jesus;—when our Lord wrought them, he performed them by his own authority: "*I say unto you, Arise, take up thy bed,*" &c. By no human name or authority could power be given to a lame man to walk. *Of Nazareth]* By this appellation he was generally known. Peter desired that the lame man should know by whom he was healed, that he might be induced, from a sense of his mercy, to give him his heart. It may be that he had heard of him in the temple. *Rise up, and walk]* No preliminary steps, allowing of cure by the use of remedies, or by means of deception, are here seen. The first command is for the utterly helpless man to rise and walk, as if he had always enjoyed the use of his limbs. Notice the faith of the man—weak and helpless as he was, he immediately obeyed the apostle's commands. He did not wait until he felt that his limbs were strengthened, but at once obeyed the divine injunction. In this way we should come to Christ, weak and sinful as we are, trusting implicitly in his atonement and promise for forgiveness. Obey him, believe him *now*. Wait not to feel and know that the right hand of faith is strong before it is stretched out, but stretch it out, withered as it is. Say, "*I believe; Lord, help my unbelief!*" and according to your faith it shall be unto you.

7. *And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up]* The further to excite his confidence, and exhibit his sincerity and benevolence, he assisted him up by his right hand. Thus should we not only publicly point our unconverted friends to the Lamb of God, but personally address them, assuring them of our interest and sympathy; and, taking them by the hand, affectionately lead them to Christ. *And immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength]* Here the astonishing character of the miracle is seen. It was accomplished *at once*;—from being a helpless beggar, he becomes a strong, perfect man.

8 And he, leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

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8. *And he, leaping up, stood, and walked, &c.]* Not leaping, perhaps, so much for joy, as through ignorance of the proper use of his limbs. On this account his first efforts are awkward and excessive—leaping rather than walking. First he leaps, then stands still, and then walks regularly. “These actions are very naturally described. *He walked,* in obedience to the command of the apostle, *Rise up and walk: he leaped,* to try the strength of his limbs, and to be convinced of the reality of the cure: *he praised God,* as a *testimony* of the gratitude he felt for the cure he had received. Now was fulfilled, in the most *literal* manner, the words of the prophet Isaiah, chap. xxxv, 6: *The lame man shall leap as a hart.*”—CLARKE. He did not thank Peter, because the cure had not been accomplished by him. It was done in the name of Christ; therefore he passes through the gate, where he had usually been laid, into the temple court, and praises God, who had wrought such a cure in his behalf.

9. *And all the people]* All the priests, and the multitude who had come up to the temple at the hour of prayer. It was not done in a corner, but was a public spectacle.

10. *And they knew that it was he]* By his long attendance upon the temple, and his peculiarly crippled situation, he had attracted attention, and had become well known. They had no doubts of his person.

11. *And as the lame man—held Peter and John]* Or, as it may be rendered, “keeping close to.” As the apostles had been the instruments of his cure, he clung to them with strong affection, remaining by their side, that all the people might know to whom he was indebted for his recovery. *All the people ran together]* A report would soon spread throughout the temple and its vicinity, and the multitude, much excited by the occurrence, would naturally hasten to the spot where the subject of it then was. *In the porch that is called Solomon's]* The temple was surrounded by a range of cloisters, above which were galleries supported by pillars of white marble, each pillar being a single block of stone twenty-five eubits in height. The colonnade, or series of columns, and gallery, that fronted the Mount of Olives on the east, was called Solomon's porch because it stood on a vast terrace, which

12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered

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he had originally raised from a valley beneath by a wall, five hundred feet in height, of solid masonry. It was the only part of Solomon's original work which remained in the second temple.

12. *He answered]* The word here used means to *address*, rather than to answer—he commenced his address. *Why marvel ye at this?]* Why are you at a loss, astonished, as if something unaccountable had happened? A miracle had often occurred among them; God had already, through the apostles, exhibited signs and wonders, especially on the day of Pentecost. Why, therefore, should they fail for a moment to attribute this event to God, and praise his divine power, rather than look on with stupid astonishment, or indulge the idea that it was solely the work of the apostles? *Why look ye so earnestly on us, &c.]* How manifest is the humility of the apostles! They take to themselves no honor from this transaction, but express their surprise that the multitude should gaze upon them as if they had performed the cure. It was the more astonishing that *men of Israel*, who knew the power of God, should seem to believe this a work of man. *Our own power]* Miraculous energy. *Or holiness]* Or on account of our supereminent piety, to honor us. It was purely a work of God. O how worthy of the imitation of all is this spirit of Peter! As success is wholly of God, so let the glory be solely ascribed to his name!

13. *The God of Abraham, &c.]* Skillfully does the apostle turn the present opportunity into a means of preaching Christ to his brethren, the Jews, according to the flesh. He now proceeds to show that the very God their fathers worshiped, whom they so much honored—he who had styled himself the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, (Exod. iii, 6,)—had thus indisputably testified to the Messiahship of Jesus Christ his Son, and by whom God had performed this miracle. By this introduction, the apostle shows them that he preaches no new religion, nothing inconsistent with the belief of their fathers, or with the law of Moses; that this same Jesus was the subject of the memorable covenant with Abraham, renewed to Isaac and Jacob, and afterward with the chosen people, through Moses. *Hath glorified his Son]* Hath honored him by his resurrection and ascension, and has set his seal to his Messiahship. The cure was in the *name* of Jesus, and the power of God honored that name with an immediate

up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go.

14 But ye denied the Holy One, and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

16 And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this

answer. The apostle places this exalted regard of God—the God of *their fathers*—in contrast with their treatment of Jesus, and charges home upon them, thus convicted, the guilt of their sin, with great power. *Ye delivered up*] To the Roman governor to be put to death. (Note, chap. ii, 23.) *And denied him in the presence of Pilate*] “Renounced and denied as a Saviour.” Although the Hope and King of Israel, whom the fathers by faith saw, ye rejected him, denied that he was your King, and gave him up as a malefactor. *When he was determined to let him go*] Even when Pilate, convinced of his innocence, but weak, and unwilling to discharge him himself, offered to release him, they chose a murderer in his place. Matt. xxvii, 18, 23; Luke xxiii, 4, 14, 22; John xix, 12.

14. *The Holy One, and the Just*] Appellations of the Messiah. Acts iv, 27; Rev. iii, 7; John x, 36; Psa. xvi, 10. The term Just refers to his entire innocence of the charges for which he was tried before Pilate. *And desired a murderer to be granted unto you*] Matt. xxvii, 21.

15. *And killed the Prince of life*] “The Author of life.” The term denotes the office of a leader or commander; and as he leads on, and secures, by his superior skill, the victory, the word comes to denote one who is the *cause, procurer, or author*. Our Saviour is styled, in Heb. ii, 10, the *Captain* of our salvation, (the same word being used,) as he is the cause or procurer of it. In Heb. xii, 2, the term is rendered *author*: “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith.” Jesus is the source of life spiritual and temporal. John i, 4; v, 21. He has procured for those that believe in him eternal life—opened the door, by leading the way through the grave to a blissful immortality; therefore he says of himself, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life*.” How strong the contrast of the apostle! They had demanded a murderer, one who had taken life, and given up the Author and Prince of life itself. *Whom God hath raised up*] Acts ii, 24, 32.

16. *And his name, through faith in his name*] That is, the power of God, in answer to prayer in his name, or an invocation to him, (the name being used for the person,) through faith in him, has wrought this cure. The faith spoken of may refer to the apostles—through faith in Jesus, as their Saviour, Messiah, and in his promise to work signs and wonders by them, they had commanded this man to walk,

man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him, hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers.

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and it was according to their faith; or it might here refer to both the faith of the apostles and the immediately awakened confidence in Jesus in the mind of the lame man, of whom he had undoubtedly heard before, if he had not even seen him. The object of the apostle was to convince the Jews that the cure, evidently the exertion of divine power, was the work of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had slain, and that it could not have been done unless, as he asserted, Jesus was now exalted to glory, and was truly the Son of God. *Strong]* The muscles and joints of his limbs were naturally so weak that he could not walk, but they had been made sufficiently strong to discharge their office. *Whom ye see and know]* He was not a stranger to them. If there had been the smallest opportunity of convicting the apostle of an imposition, now was the time. But no one attempted it. The miracle was too evident. How does this miracle differ from the pretended cures and extraordinary occurrences related by the Roman Catholics, and presented by the enemies of Christianity as proofs against the reality of all miraculous occurrences? In the latter case, the observers are few—the event often accidental, and easily traced to some natural cause, or to direct deception; in the former, the scene transpired in the most public place in the city—upon a well-known subject—in the eyes of multitudes, with every opportunity to examine, and every possible reason to scrutinize carefully every circumstance. The very simplicity of the recital, and the full detail of all the circumstances without note or comment on the part of the evangelist, without any attempt to make it appear more august, or even to prove that it did thus transpire, or to draw the natural inferences from it in reference to Christ and his gospel, are among not the least convincing evidences of the truthfulness of the story and the reality of the occurrence itself. *Faith which is by him]* The faith in himself which Jesus had produced in their minds by his teachings, miracles, promises, and by his Spirit. *Perfect soundness]* Entire relief from his lameness. It was an entire cure, as could be seen by all whom he addressed.

17. *And now, brethren]* Although guilty of the death of the Saviour, the apostle, with the spirit of the same Jesus who had prayed, as he hung upon the cross, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,” (Luke xxiii, 34,) tenderly addresses them, as he notices,

18 But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may

perhaps, some evidences of rising contrition, with the appellation, "brethren," and offers a reason, though not excuse, for their conduct. *I wot that through ignorance] I know;* as Dr. Scott renders it. I am willing candidly to suppose that you and your rulers did this deed through ignorance. This ignoranee had resulted from pride, prejudice, and lust, but still "they would not have erucified the Lord of glory if they had known him." It was not the Messiah, as they thought, whom they crucified, but a blasphemer and an impostor. Of course they were still *guilty*, as this pride, prejudice, and lust were criminal, and the unholy cause of their greater sin. It was, however, a most tender and effectual approach to their hearts.

18. *But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets]* But the events which actually occurred, the eruel persecution and bitter death, had been foretold by the prophets generally. It is not meant that each of the prophets refers to these events in particular, but that the prophecies concerning Christ, taken together, fully disclose all the sufferings and ignominy that he has passed through at their hands. *He hath so fulfilled]* God has so far overruled your voluntary treatment of the Prince of life as to accomplitsh his own divine purposes. In permitting the rulers to deliver him up to death, in their ignorance and sin, he has brought about the fulfillment, without intention on your part of doing so, of his own inspired predictions. The apostle is not here justifying them for their blindness and sin; by no means—they were very guilty, and he held them to be so—but he is preparing the way to secure their repentance: he is about to assure them that although he had died at their hands, he was not lost to them as a Messiah and Saviour; that there was a divine purpose in his death; that their sin had been overruled for good; and that, by that death, a way was opened for their forgiveness and salvation.

19. *Repent ye, therefore]* (Note, ehap. ii, 38.) *Be converted]* The former denotes a change of mind and heart; the latter, a change of life. The word properly means *to turn*, to change their course. They had turned away from Christ and rejected him; now the apostle exhorts them, convicted as they are of their sins, to repent and turn *to him*, reeeeive him as their Saviour, believe fully in him, and walk in his commandments. *That your sins may be blotted out]* May be forgiven; the record of them be stricken out. The word,

be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

remarks Dr. Bloomfield, sometimes signifies to wipe off characters chalked on a board or traced on a slate, or to obliterate any writing, whether on waxed tablets, or on parchment, either by *scratching out*, or *crossing out*. And as crossing out accounts in a ledger implies that the sums are discharged, or the payment forgiven, so the word came to mean, in a figurative sense, to *forgive offenses*, as in Isaiah xlivi, 25, (which the apostle has, no doubt, in his mind :) “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions.” *When the times of refreshing shall come]* This is more literally and properly rendered, *So that the times of refreshing may come*. The one will assuredly follow the other. If they were truly penitent, and were converted, or turned from their sinful courses, then would come a refreshing, a *breathing time*, a *rest*, as the word literally means; they should have a respite from all their troubles, a rest from all weariness—a refreshing, a baptism of the Holy Spirit, from the *presence of the Lord*. Tossed about, troubled, oppressed by their foreign rulers, distracted by civil war, how well calculated to draw them to humble contrition and a change of life was this gracious assurance of the apostle! By the times of refreshing, some suppose is meant the whole period of the duration of the kingdom of grace—the blissful and happy times of Christ, in which he gives to all his true disciples “*peace, love, and joy, and communion with himself*.” Others suppose it refers to a literal reign of Christ upon the earth at the close of the present dispensation, in which all the prophecies, referring to the future glory and happiness of the church, shall be fully and literally fulfilled—a glorious, universal, and *peaceful rule*, over the earth. This the apostles and Jewish disciples expected. Almost the last question they had asked the Master before his ascension had been, “Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Acts i, 6. The expectation of such an event our Lord did not see fit to quench in their minds, while he assured them that times and seasons were known only to the Father, and not to be revealed. Others have referred it to his coming at the end of the world—and glorious resurrection of the saints, and their introduction into the unutterable joys of heaven, into the very presence of the Lamb, by the beatific sight of whom they would for ever be refreshed. Dr. Scott remarks:—“The prophets in general not only predicted glorious times to the church under the reign of the Messiah, but to the nation of Israel when converted to him. That nation had long been harassed and oppressed in various ways, and was at the time when Peter spoke under the Roman yoke,

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

21 Whom the heaven must receive, until the times of restitu-

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which was extremely galling; and the wickedness of the rulers and people, in crucifying the Messiah, might seem to have filled up the measure of their national guilt, and ripened them for destruction. But as Jesus, after his resurrection, had directed his apostles to ‘preach repentance and the remission of sins in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem,’ and as the success of their first attempt had been so signal, and they had hitherto met with no opposition, it is probable that they expected that Christ would soon ‘restore the kingdom to Israel,’ having first brought the nation in general to repent and believe in him; and would afterward, by their means, bring the other nations to embrace the religion of Israel, and so, as proselytes, to seek admission into the kingdom of the Messiah. Then, perhaps, they expected that Jesus would return again from heaven, set up a triumphant kingdom on the earth; and, destroying all obstinate enemies, would introduce those glorious days, which all the prophets had foretold. It is undeniable, that the apostles, for a considerable time after the day of Pentecost, did not clearly understand many things relating to the calling of the Gentiles, the rejection of the Jews, and the fulfillment of the prophecies.—Had the nation of Israel, as a body, embraced the gospel, the times of refreshing would have come from the presence of the Lord; and when the nation shall thus turn to their long-rejected Messiah, those times will come.” Says Didriot,—“Divine refreshment would no doubt immediately mingle itself with the sense of pardon, and eternal happiness would at length certainly succeed. But the following clause seems to intimate that Peter apprehended that the conversion of the Jews, as a people, would be attended with some extraordinary scene of prosperity and joy, and open a speedy way to Christ’s descent from heaven, in order to the restitution of all things.”

20. *And he shall send Jesus Christ]* “And that he may send.” Referring to his second and glorious coming in the clouds of heaven. *Which before was preached unto you]* The most ancient manuscript copies of the Scripture read, and correctly, probably, instead of *preached*,—*designed, approved*;—whom of old was appointed, or designated as your Saviour. Of him had the prophets written—him had they designated as the Redemer of Israel.

21. *Whom the heavens must receive]* Peter here meets one of the common objections of the Jews, that, when the Messiah came, he was to abide for ever. John xii, 36. But Jesus had been crucified. How

tion of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began.

22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the

could this be ? To answer this, he has before established the fact of his resurrection and his ascension ; he now asserts that this was necessary, was proper, was expedient ; that he should remain in the heavens, as he had finished his sufferings upon the earth. It was a part of his grand design. There he will continue until he come to restore all things. *The times of restitution]* The word signifies a restoration to a former condition—a change for the better. In the mind of the apostle it evidently referred to the “restoration of Israel;” their conversion to the gospel and political recovery, the consequent state of universal blessedness ; and the removal of the curse from the earth and its animal inhabitants, as prophesied by Isaiah. The words, in a spiritual sense, may refer to the times of the Messiah, the end of whose coming was to restore all things to the lost estate. He came to seek and to save the lost ; to redeem man from his rebellion, sin, and misery, to allegiance with God, to holiness and happiness ; to break up the dominion of the adversary, and enthrone the true God in the hearts of all his subjects. When a man loves God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and his neighbor as himself, under the operation of the gospel of Christ, all things as to this individual are restored. When this becomes universal, it will be the time of the restitution of all things. In Scripture, the kingdom of God and the reign of Christ are often made to comprehend its whole duration, from its commencement, in the present state of gracious probation, to its glorious consummation. This will be the period when Jesus shall return again the second time ; when all his enemies will be subdued ; and his saints, raised in their resurrection bodies, be fully restored to all the joys of heaven, and commence an unchanging and endless reign of holiness and general happiness. *Which God hath spoken]* Hath revealed. *All the holy prophets]* All is omitted in many manuscript copies, and it reads, “by the mouth of the holy prophets;” this blessed period being clearly foretold in the predictions of the inspired writers.

22. *For Moses truly said unto the fathers]* Moses had thus spoken of Christ in his address to the children of Israel in the wilderness. The passage is found in Deut. xviii, 15, 19 ; not quoted literally, but the sense is given, and that by an inspired commentator. “One cannot imagine a more masterly address than this ; to warn the Jews of the dreadful consequences of their infidelity in the very words of Moses, their favorite prophet, out of a pretended zeal for whom they were

Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you.

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ready to reject Christianity, and to attempt its destruction."—DODDRIDGE. *A prophet*] Our Lord was to be pre-eminently a prophet—the great teacher. (See Isa. lxi, 1–3.) The Jews have usually interpreted the passage in Deuteronomy to refer to a succession of prophets, or inspired teachers, who should, by their instructions, preserve them from idolatry; and some Christian commentators hold the same opinion. This view of the passage certainly has been fulfilled by the history of events, prophet after prophet, in a long succession until Christ, did God raise up for them; but that the passage had an especial reference to the Messiah, is made evident by the inspired assertion of the apostle. This is confirmed by noticing the points of similarity between Moses and our Saviour. (See below.) *Of your brethren*] Of your descendants—nation. *Like unto me*] The points of similarity are thus stated by Mr. Wesley: "Moses instituted the Jewish church: Christ instituted the Christian. With the prophesying of Moses were soon joined the effect—the deliverance of Israel from Egypt: with the prophesying of Christ that grand effect—the deliverance of his people from sin and death. Those who could not bear the voice of God, yet desired to hear that of Moses: much more do those who are wearied with the law desire to hear the voice of Christ. Moses spake to the people all, and only those things which God had commanded him: so did Christ. But though he was like Moses, yet was he infinitely superior to him in person as well as in office. Both were immediately called and commissioned of God for their office; both in constant and direct communication with God; both mediators between their people and God,—Christ, indeed, in an infinitely higher sense; and both were lawgivers—Moses of the law of rigid justice, Jesus of the law of love. If Moses did not have the Saviour in his mind when this passage was penned, it may be considered one of those portions of the Old Testament, 'which,' in the language of Bishop Middleton, 'are capable of a twofold application: being directly applicable to circumstances then past, or present, or soon to be accomplished; and indirectly to others, which divine Providence was about to develop under a future dispensation.'" *Him shall ye hear in all things*] It will be your duty. Attend to him as you have to me, he has the same authority. Whatever he command, *in all things* obey him, although his precepts, in many things, may seem to be at variance with mine. The apostle thus obtains, for the teachings of Christ, all the authority of their venerated prophet.

23 And it shall come to pass, *that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.*

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

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-23. *And it shall come to pass]* It shall happen—shall occur. *Every soul which will not hear that prophet]* Every person that rejects him, or refuses to receive his teaching. *Shall be destroyed from among the people]* Shall forfeit his portion from among the people of God—shall be cut off from all their privileges and promises, and be excluded from all their future enjoyments. *To be cut off from the people, or to be destroyed from among the people,* was the severest penalty that could be visited upon a Jew, as it immediately removed him from participating in the rites of his nation, severed him from all his religious privileges, and the benefit of the covenant between God and his people, and made him as a stranger and a heathen. Exod. xxx, 33; Num. xv, 31; Lev. vii, 21. In the passage in Deuteronomy it is said, “I will require it of him.” Deut. xviii, 19. That is, I will hold him responsible—make him accountable for this rejection. The apostle thus impresses them with the fact, that their rejection of this prophet, whom Moses had foretold, could only be at their own peril—even their excision from among the children of God.

24. *Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel]* Samuel was considered the first great prophet after Moses. Divine communications, until his day, were made usually by angelic administration, and by the Urim and Thummim. Exod. xxviii, 3; Num. xxvii, 21. Samuel was the first after Moses, also, who predicted concerning the Messiah: the two are mentioned together in Psa. xcix, 6. The prophecy alluded to in Samuel is recorded in 2 Sam. vii, 16, 25, 29. By *all the prophets*, is meant the prophets *in general*. As many as have referred to it have agreed with each other concerning *these days*—the days of the Messiah.

25. *Ye are the children of the prophets]* Ye are not only of the same nation, the literal descendants, but ye are their disciples and pupils; they eminently belong to you; they were inspired and taught for your benefit; their writings now are yours—for your improvement and direction. Teachers are often thus termed *fathers*, and pupils, *sons*. Matt. xii, 27. *And of the covenant which God made with our fathers]* They stood also in the same close relation to the covenant God had made with Abraham and Isaac, and had renewed to their fathers, which

26 Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

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covenant embraced, as its chief promise, the Messiah. By natural descent, this covenant was eminently theirs ; they were embraced and represented in their fathers when God eovenanted with them. Now, if they rejeeted Christ, how hopeless and helpless their situation, and how great their sin on aecount of their peculiar relation to the Messiah, and their superior opportunities. *Saying unto Abraham]* Here the apostle recites a portion of the covenant, (see Gen. xii, 3, and xxii, 18,) evidently referring to the Saviour, and as they had been taught to receive it.

26. *Unto you first]* As the immediate descendants of the fathers, and children of the covenant, Jesus is offered as a Saviour. Thus Christ sent his apostles first to them, Matt. x, 5, 6 ; and to the Jews was repentance first to be preached. Luke xxiv, 47. *Having raised up]* Not referring to resurrection from the dead, but appointment to a certain officee. (See verse 22.) As Moses had been *raised up*, or appointed by God as their prophet, so in due time Christ was ordained, according to the promise, to be a mediator and Saviour. *To bless you]* To fulfill the covenant to Abraham, that you and all the nations of the earth should be blessed—made happy—prospered—saved spiritually. *In turning away every one of you from his iniquities]* This was the highest blessing of the covenant. Political aseendancy and temporal good, which they were expecting, in their present state would not have been a blessing ; but forgiveness of sin, and a meetness for a spiritual and eternal kingdom, this indeed was worthy of their consideration—this was for them if they would have it. *Every one of you]* Not neccesarily *accomplishing* this, but affording an *opportunity*—preparing the way, so that whoever believed might be saved ; for it is very evident that the Saviour did not actually turn away *even one* of the Jews from their iniquities, only those who *received him* gave he power to beeome the sons of God ; while the multitude, with equal opportunities, rejected him and perished. We may learn, from the address of Peter, that the highest religious privileges will not save us. It was not enough that the Jews were the children of the prophets and of the covenant. Sincere repentance, and a change of heart and life, could alone save them in the great day of the Son of man. It is not enough that Jesus has opened the way of salvation, and offered forgiveness to all to insure our salvation, if, like the Jews, we reject Christ himself and his gospel. Unless we are truly born of the Spirit, be converted and become like little children, exhibit in our tempers and deportment the

fruits of the Spirit, and continue faithful unto death, we cannot enter into the eternal kingdom of Christ, nor receive the crown of life. Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. Repent, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and a time of refreshing shall come to thy heart from the presence of the Lord.

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## CHAPTER IV.

1. The rulers of the Jews offended with Peter's sermon, 4, (though thousands of the people were converted that heard the word,) imprison him and John. 5. Afterward Peter openly avowing, upon his examination, that the lame man was healed by the name of Jesus, and that by the same Jesus only we can be eternally saved, 13, they command him and John to preach no more in that name, adding also threatening; 23, whereupon the church betakes herself to prayer. 31. And God, by shaking the place where they were assembled, testified that he heard their prayer, and also baptized the church with the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, so that they loved each other fervently, and shared their substance with the needy.

AND as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them,

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1. *And as they spake]* While the apostles Peter and John, as related in the preceding chapter, were publicly discoursing concerning the Messiah. *The priests]* Who were ministering in the temple, and who were exceedingly bitter against Jesus Christ, his doctrines, and his disciples. Some have supposed that they were members of the Sanhedrim, or great council, from the authority they exercised in arresting the apostles and putting them in confinement. Verse 3. *And the captain of the temple]* Some commentators suppose this to have been a Jewish officer. There was a temple guard of priests and Levites; the priests keeping watch in three places, and the Levites in twenty-one. To every one of these watches there was a chief, and over them all an experienced priest was placed, who was properly styled the captain, or ruler, of the temple. In this case, the priests referred to were the members of his guard, the priests composing the different watches. Lightfoot and others suppose that reference is here made to a Roman military officer who had charge of the garrison stationed in the lofty tower of Antonia, which rose upon the wall between the temple and the city, and completely commanded the former. This had formerly been the residence of the high priest; but the Roman governor, in order to control the tumultuous and licentious multitudes of Jews, who, divided into factions, often contended among themselves in the very courts of the temple, placed a garrison, under the charge of an officer, in this commanding fortress, immediately con-

2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

3 And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the next day; for it was now eventide.

4 Howbeit, many of them which heard the word, believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

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nected with the temple, and into which they could immediately rush upon the slightest disturbance. *And the Sadducees]* (See Longking's Notes, vol. i, p. 166; vol. ii, pp. 320, 340; vol. iv, p. 97.) The Sadducees were enraged because the apostles taught the doctrine of a resurrection from the dead, which they denied, and because they rested their belief upon the resurrection of Jesus, whom they asserted to be an impostor. If he had indeed arisen, then had they, in connection with the priests and rulers, slain the Just and Holy One. Alike irritated by the stings of conscience, their fears, and their passions, they make a common cause, and determine to silence the apostles who are thus boldly preaching Jesus and the resurrection. *Came upon them]* The word contains an idea of suddenness and violence. They rushed violently upon them.

2. *Being grieved]* Being vexed, indignant, enraged, rather than sorrowful. *That they taught the people]* They were vexed that these unlearned Galileans, who were not priests, or regularly constituted teachers, should presume to take their place, and instruct the people. They were also incensed at the idea of their obtaining the good-will of the multitude, and their belief in the views that the apostles held and taught. *And preached, through Jesus, the resurrection from the dead]* And here the priests united with the infidel Sadducees; for although they admitted that the dead would hereafter rise again, yet they would not admit that Christ had risen, and thus demonstrated the fact of a resurrection; for if they did, in the first place it would make them liars, for they had circulated the falsehood that the disciples had stolen away Jesus by night from the tomb, and it would have convicted them of the fearful guilt of being the murderers of the Messiah;—the fact of his resurrection and ascension at once establishing his Messiahship.

3. *And they laid hands on them]* Took them forcibly. *Put them in hold]* Put them in prison, or in the custody of certain persons. *Eventide]* Tide was formerly added to certain words to express time, or season. It was now evening. It was three o'clock, P. M., when Peter and John went up to the temple, and the apostles had been engaged some time in teaching.

4. *Howbeit]* Nevertheless. Notwithstanding this attack of the priests, and the straits into which the apostles were drawn on account of their

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,

6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

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faith in Christ, many that heard believed and were converted. Persecution has never injured, but, on the contrary, has rather served to build up, Christ's church. The blood of the martyrs has always been the seed of the church. *Which heard the word]* The address of Peter. *And the number of the men was about five thousand]* The term *men* is here used, as it often is in the Scriptures, without reference to sex, and means *persons*. Luke xi, 31; Rom. iv, 8. The number five thousand is generally supposed to embrace those who were converted on the day of Pentecost and the church existing before that, as well as those who had believed since that period. The words, without injustice to the original, may be translated, "the number—*was become*" five thousand.

5. *And it came to pass]* It happened. *Their rulers]* The chief men among them—members of the Sanhedrim. (See Longking's Notes, vol. ii, p. 26; vol. iv, p. 68.) *Elders]* The more aged and experienced, whose years, gravity, and high rank, had procured for them a seat in the council. *Scribes]* Their chief business was transcribing and teaching the Scriptures in the temple and synagogues. They were much respected on account of their employment, and would, therefore, be peculiarly eligible to a seat in the Sanhedrim.

6. *And Annas the high priest]* Annas was not, in fact, the presiding high priest at this time, but having, for a number of years, held this office, and it now being in the hands of his son-in-law, he was honored with the title as long as he lived. Thus we sometimes speak of one who has been president, but is not now in office; as *President Van Buren, &c.* "He lived," says Dr. Clarke, "to see five of his sons succeed him to this office." He is the same person as Ananus, mentioned by Josephus. *Caiaphas]* Was the son-in-law of Annas, and was the existing high priest; and because Annas was still admitted to the council, and, on account of years, experience, and power, shared the honors of the office, they are both sometimes styled high priests; as, in the Gospel of St. Luke, it is stated that Annas and Caiaphas were high priests when John began to preach in the wilderness. Luke iii, 2. Annas, as well as Caiaphas, took part in the condemnation and death of Christ. John xviii, 13. *And John and Alexander]* Commentators have offered different opinions concerning these men, supposing that they recognize the same persons in the Talmud and in

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name have ye done this?

the pages of Josephus; but, as the names are both very common among the Jews, these opinions must be very uncertain. They were undoubtedly among the first Jews in wealth, reputation, and power, and exercised more or less control, from their importance, over the decisions of the Sanhedrim. *And as many as were of the kindred of the high priest]* This may refer to the members of the families of Caiaphas and Annas; or, as it may be rendered, *of the race of the high priests*. It may denote the heads of the twenty-four sacerdotal classes, or the kindred of those who had lately held the office of high priest. These were to be the judges of these humble fishermen. What an array of power, honor, wealth, and office! If Christianity had been an imposition; could it have stood before such a tribunal? If the apostles had not had more than human courage and wisdom vouchsafed to them, would they not have turned pale before such an array? Could the uneducated Peter, unassisted, have spoken such a clear, noble, triumphant, and skillful justification? Christ gave him, in that same hour, when he stood before this august human tribunal, *what he should speak*, according to his promise.

7. *And when they had set them in the midst]* The council sat in a semicircle, the president in the centre of the half circle, and the accused stood before him in the centre of the area formed by their seats. Here, with all the eyes of the seventy-two councilors and of the powerful visitors fixed upon them, were placed the apostles. *By what power, or by what name have ye done this?*] It is possible by this question they intended to overawe and intimidate the apostles, as much as to say, By what authority are you found teaching in the temple? In the name of whom, and aided by what evil spirit, have you performed this magical work? What account have you to give of yourself for thus encroaching upon the established order and rule, instructing the people without the permission of the council? Was this accomplished by a lawful or unlawful power, in a permitted or forbidden name? It is worthy of notice that they do not question the fact of the miracle. How could they? The lame man, now healed, was an invincible confirmation of this. How eagerly, if there had been the least possible opportunity of proving an imposition, would they have seized upon it! But they admit the fact of the cure; and, as in the miracle of our Saviour, seek to attribute it to the power of the devil. The Jews believed that cures were wrought by human, divine, angelic, or diabolic agency. They believed that by charms, exorcisms, and Satanic influence, wonders and miracles

might be performed; but these were forbidden by their law: and those guilty of resorting to such means were liable to condemnation and punishment by the Sanhedrim. By such an accusation they might hope to destroy the apostles, and crush the new church in its infancy; cut them off as exorcists, witches, or persons having communion with the devil. The editor of the Pictorial Bible has an interesting note upon this passage, which, though somewhat lengthy, we copy as an illustration of several similar passages of Scripture:— “There were certain names, by pronouncing which, or by invoking the power of those to whom they belonged, they believed that strange things might be effected. The first of these names, and too sacred to be pronounced or employed for any such purpose, was the *Shem-hamphorash*, or ineffable name of God, as the Jews call the name Jchovah. By the true pronunciation of this, it was held that any wonders might be effected; and it is a fact, that it has been the common account of the Jews that our Lord’s miracles were effected by his having acquired the knowledge of this unutterable name. Their story is, that the name was found by David, engraven on a stone, when digging the foundations of the temple, and that he deposited it in the sanctuary; and lest curious young men should learn this name, and bring devastation upon the world, by the miracles it would enable them to perform, the wise men of the time made, by magical arts, two brazen lions, which they stationed before the entrance of the holy of holies, on each side; so that if any one entered the sacred place, and learned the ineffable name, the lions roared at him so fiercely, when he went forth, that, in his fright, he entirely forgot it. But they say that Jesus, by magical arts and incantations, entered the sanctuary, undiscovered by the priests, saw the sacred name, copied it on parchment, which, having made an incision in his body, he slipped under his skin. The roaring of the lions, when he came out, caused him to forget the name; but the parchment, under his skin, enabled him to recover it, and thenceforward to refresh his memory when needful; and by the power of this name it was that all his miracles were performed. Such is the account given in the ‘*Sepher Toldoth Jesu*,’ or ‘Book of the Generation of Jesus;’ a spurious narrative of Jewish fabrication, from which the Jews have, for ages, received their impressions concerning the life and character of Jesus Christ. This stupid story requires no contradiction; and we have adduced it not only for the illustration which it offers to the present text, but on account of the very valuable intimation which it conveys, that the Jews found it hopeless to attempt to dispute the reality of our Lord’s miracles, and therefore resorted to the absurd way of accounting for the power by which he was enabled to per-

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole ;

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form them. But it was also believed that other names had healing or miraculous power, although vastly inferior to that of the *Tetragrammaton*. Hence, Josephus describes the Jews as working cures by invoking the name of Solomon; and states that the Essenes preserved the names of angels; by which we may readily believe them to have expected to cure diseases and work miracles. It is also worthy of note, that after the apostles had established the power of the name of Jesus, the seven sons of one Sceva, acting on the common opinion as to the influence of *names*, pretended to cure a possessed person by invoking *the name of Jesus, whom Paul preached* Acts xix, 13."

8. *Filled with the Holy Ghost*] As on the day of Pentecost. Endowed, and directed by that Spirit that guides into all truth. In Matt. x, 19, 20, where the Saviour promises to be their wisdom when they are brought before kings and governors, he adds, "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." Now was this promise eminently fulfilled. What a visible exhibition of the power and presence of the Holy Ghost is given in the humble boldness, and the extraordinary clearness and power of these unlearned, ignorant, and naturally timid men, on this trying occasion! *Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel*] The apostle again gives an example of respect and Christian courtesy toward those in authority, however cruel and unjust their spirit may be. It is better to *suffer* than to *do* wrong. Notice how willing Peter is now, in the most public place in Jerusalem, and before the most august assembly of the nation, to acknowledge Christ and defend his gospel. When Jesus stood accused before this same assembly, he had basely denied his Master. Grace has now triumphed—the cowardly, sinful nature, has been destroyed. Perfect love for his Master has cast out all fear; and now he delights to exhibit the sincerity of his penitence for his former conduct by boldly testifying for Christ before the rulers of his people. We should ever be ready, in all companies, at all suitable times, *to give to every man that asketh us, a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear*, as the same apostle directs in 1 Peter iii, 15.

9. *If we this day be examined*] "Since we are called to examination this day." *Good deed*] The miracle of mercy, a most benevolent act, and one that an *evil* spirit would not be likely to perform. *Impotent*

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

11 This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

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*man]* Lame, powerless. *By what means he is made whole]* As if he had said, If this is really a question with you, and you sincerely desire to know, as you have asked, by what power or name the cure was accomplished, then listen to a direct answer. *Be it known unto you]* Hear the answer. Peter does not waver, or equivocate, does not attempt to justify his course by any excuse, or prepare their minds by a long introduction to receive an unwelcome truth. He came immediately to the point. Be assured of this, &c.

10. *By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth]* By the authority and power of Jesus Christ. Peter disclaimed all power of his own in the miracle. He also boldly declared the Messiahship of Jesus, in the title Christ, and the more so as this miracle demonstrated his right to it. *Of Nazareth]* His name of disrepute, by which he was most generally known. Humble and bold, indeed, was the apostle, and not ashamed to acknowledge him, of whom his judges would naturally ask, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" and whom they crucified. As a council, they had condemned to death, and instigated the multitude to demand his crucifixion of Pilate. How must their consciences have stung them upon this awful, because true, charge! *Whom God raised from the dead]* On every occasion the apostles allude to this great fact—the resurrection of Jesus, as this confirmed his divine mission. Why did not the rulers rebut this assertion of the apostle, by their story of the theft of his body, if they believed this to have been the truth? *Doth this man stand before you whole]* The healed man is there, still cleaving to his friends, and hastens in the morning to their trial. He confronts the council, a standing and unanswerable argument in favor of the truth and piety of the apostles.

11. *This is the stone]* This crucified and risen Saviour. The apostle applies to Christ a prophetic passage from the Psalms of David, which they, in their rejection and crucifixion of Christ, had fulfilled, Psa. cxviii, 22: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." This quotation our Lord also applied to himself, when addressing the chief priests and scribes, a short time before he was betrayed into their hands. Matt. xxi, 42. They who esteemed themselves the defenders and supervisors of the

12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

13 Now, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and

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church, and who, as builders, should have been acquainted with the quality of the material most suitable for embellishing and sustaining the great spiritual edifice, had overlooked and despised a stone, of incalculable value, and capable of reflecting glory over the whole edifice; yet God, in his government and providence, has overruled this very rejection in such a manner as to make the rejected stone the chief corner-stone, filling the most conspicuous and important place. This had been also foretold in Isa. xxviii, 16: "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, and precious," which Peter quotes in his epistle. 1 Peter ii, 6. Though the head men of the Jewish church rejected Christ, yet, by his death, he became the corner-stone of the spiritual temple; and to all that believe, rest as *living stones* upon him, the corner-stone, he is indeed precious, as the apostle asserts.

12. *Neither is there salvation in any other]* In a beautiful manner the apostle changes his discourse from the immediate theme to one still more important, from the healing of the lame man to the salvation of the soul. There is no bodily or spiritual healing in any other name, power, or person. *For there is none other name]* There is no other means of salvation. As if he had said, the very virtue of the Mosaic law depended upon its connection with the Messiah. All who had been saved, had, through the shadows of good things to come, seen, rejoiced, and trusted in, the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, in the divine plan of salvation through a promised Messiah, and henceforth none could be saved but by faith in him, as having accomplished his work, and as now sitting at the right hand of power. Thus did our Lord in his teachings when upon earth, from ordinary and common occurrences, take occasion to announce and illustrate the most important truths—as with the woman of Samaria, from the lack of bread among his disciples, from the lilies of the field—so now from the healing of the cripple, the apostle, moved by the Holy Ghost, finds occasion to preach repentance and the remission of sins through faith in a crucified Saviour. Reader, hast thou felt this solemn truth, that there is none other name under heaven whereby we must be saved? or art thou trusting in dead works, cold morality, or presuming upon mercy when thou dost, in thy life and affections, reject the only Saviour?

13. *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John]* "The freedom or boldness of speech." Their peculiar self-possession, as if they

perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

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really believed, and had implicit confidence in what they stated, their calm and solemn demeanor, so unusual in persons of ordinary advantages and unused to addressing public assemblies. The judges were fairly awed by their prisoner. *Perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men]* "Having perceived" or "learned" that they were *unlettered* men; that is, they had not been educated in the rabbinical schools, and had not learned the glosses and traditions upon the Scriptures that the Jews considered the most valuable knowledge; and also that they were *private* persons, for this is the sense of the word translated ignorant—were men who had been engaged in laborious occupations, not scribes or lawyers, and, therefore, not accustomed to speaking. Men are not always the best learned who have been educated in the schools—some unlettered, private men, have been eminently wise unto salvation, and preached with power sent down from on high. 1 Cor. i, 26, 29. *They marveled]* Wondered—were surprised—it was so unusual—almost miraculous. *And they took knowledge of them]* It may have been by the similarity of their appearance and address to Christ when he stood before the same tribunal. They now manifested the *spirit* of Christ—the same meekness and respect for office, the same uncommon command over their passions, the same bold, simple, clear discourse; for the apostles, like their Master, *spake with authority, and not as the scribes.* The passage may mean, that they recollect that they had been with Jesus, or obtained evidence, by some means, that the accused had been the disciples of him whom they had crucified before his death.

14. *Standing with them]* As it may be translated, "Standing on his feet"—no longer a cripple. *Could say nothing against it]* The fact was too stubborn. They had known the man. Here he was before their eyes, a healed man. No falsehood, as in the case of Christ's resurrection, could cover their base retreat from the evident truth now. Still they were unwilling—so depraved, so blind is the heart, loving darkness rather than light, that they rejected the evidence of their own senses.

15. *When they had commanded them to go aside out of the council]* Their examination was ended, and they were dismissed from attendance, that the council might consider their defense, learn the general opi-

16 Saying, What shall we do to these men ? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

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nion, and act in concert. This was customary, and no insult to the apostles.

16. *A notable miracle]* An astonishing miracle, the fame of which is far spread, and which cannot be denied.

17. *But that it spread no further among the people]* That the knowledge of it be no more widely circulated, and thus bring credit to the apostles ; and induce the multitude, more than one thousand of whom, through the influence of this miracle, had already been converted, to believe in the crucified Jesus. *Straitly threaten them]* Original, *Threaten them with a threat*—with severe punishment. *In this name]* In the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This was the greatest cause of vexation and fear to the council. This Jesus they had condemned, and he could now only be esteemed a prophet at their expense. If Jesus was the Messiah, they had been his bitter persecutors and murderers. They could not answer the apostle's argument, and they were too far blinded by pride and sin to follow their convictions of truth. They dared not inflict punishment upon men whose greatest crime had been an act of benevolence ; it only remained for them to command their silence for the future, and destroy, as far as possible, the impression already made upon the public mind. How impossible to shut up the influence of the gospel of Christ ! Dungeon bolts and bars have been in vain called into requisition for this purpose. When the all-powerful Saviour opens the door for the spread of his word, what human power can close it !

18. *And they called them, &c.]* This was the sentence : The apostles were not to preach Jesus and his resurrection any more—not to use his name in working miracles, or make any reference to his Messiahship.

19. *Whether it be right in the sight of God, &c.]* There is something peculiarly commanding and admirable in this response of the apostles. There is no wavering or hesitation, no consultation among themselves, no trembling fear of the threat, and, at the same time, no lack

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

21 So, when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done.

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of respect in their address. Trusting in the justice of their cause, convinced that they had the *consciences* of their judges upon their side, whatever might be their decision, they calmly, and with the utmost dignity, proposed the question, giving their accusers the choice of either horn of a painful dilemma,—to resist the evident will of God, or still to permit them to teach. If their doctrine had not been of God, signs and wonders like these would not have followed. *Judge ye!* Decide this question, say the apostles, whether it be right in the sight of God? He appeals to a higher tribunal—carries the case up to that throne where all the wrong decisions of earthly judicatures will be reversed—to hearken unto you more than unto God.

20. *We cannot but speak, &c.]* That is, consistently with our duty to God, “We cannot bring ourselves to do it.” Their evidence of Christ’s Messiahship was undoubted. They had *seen* his miracles—they *heard* the voice from heaven. They could not disbelieve, if they would, their own senses. Their Master, also, had sent them forth for this express purpose—to disciple all nations, baptizing them in the *name* of the Father, and of the *Son*, and of the Holy Ghost. “A necessity was laid upon them,” as in the case of St. Paul, 1 Cor. ix, 16; and a *wo* was upon them if they preached not the gospel.

21. *Further threatened them]* This noble appeal produced but little effect upon these iniquitous judges, further than to show the weakness and wickedness of their course; and, as any rational answer was out of the question, they resort to the final argument of tyrants and persecutors—add other threats to the preceding. *Finding nothing how they might punish them]* How gladly would they have discovered the slightest cause for administering a severe penalty! But what had they done? Healed a cripple. Could they be punished for this? *Because of the people]* The people were convinced. They had not the pride of office or character to hinder the operation of convicting grace, that now veiled the eyes of the council. They saw the hand of God was with the apostles, and they would have resisted any attempt to punish them, on the part of the rulers, for such a glorious act. *All men]* The great mass—those who had come to the knowledge of the transaction. *Glorified God for that which was done]* For it had not been done in the apostles’ name. It was a divine work, and they praised the almighty grace that had accomplished such a notable cure

22 For the man was above forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was showed.

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is;

25 Who, by the mouth of thy servant David, hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

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by man. It was an evidence that God was with them, and they rejoiced in this.

22. *Above forty years old*] Thus confirming the miracle, and making it the more remarkable. During all this period he had been a helpless, well-known object of pity and charity, and there was no cure for him save by the means of a miracle.

23. *Went to their own company*] The company of Christians, who had formed an association together, meeting daily for prayer and spiritual improvement. Acts ii, 44, 45. Undoubtedly they continued in earnest supplication during the arrest of the apostles, and they were probably thus engaged when Peter and John returned. *Reported*] Related.

24. *Lifted up their voice to God with one accord*] Prayed unitedly, all joining with their hearts in the prayer vocally offered by one of their number. Bishop Jebb remarks upon this prayer, "That this noble supplicatory hymn, poured forth at once by the whole Christian people, under the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, is worthy of that inspiration from whence it flows." *Lord, thou art God, &c.*] A sublime periphrasis for the *Lord of the universe*. Thou art the universal sovereign, having unlimited power. Against thee, all the efforts of wicked men are as nothing. Thy will must be done. Thy purposes cannot be broken. Thou, who art the Creator of all things, canst control all things. How soothing this thought to the hearts of the despised and persecuted disciples!

25. *Who, by the mouth of thy servant David, hast said*] Here is a divine attestation of the inspiration of the Psalms of David, and an inspired comment upon the second Psalm, a portion of which is quoted, and which is peculiarly fulfilled, as a prophecy, in this junction of the church, it foretelling the ineffectual attempts of powerful enemies against Christ and his church, and their utter confusion. *Heathen*] Nations not Jews. *People*] Nearly similar in meaning—a parallelism. *Rage*] Violently oppose. *Imagine vain things*] Hope for

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

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what is impossible—to destroy Christ—to accomplish their purpose against the will of God. ♦

26. *Kings of the earth]* This and the term *ruler* have nearly the same signification—the powerful; those in high places. Thus it had been in the death of Christ; the highest in the nation had appeared against him. Soon, kings literally would become their persecutors. *Stood up]* “Stood side by side for mutual help”—banded themselves together. *Gathered together]* Consulted together. *Against the Lord, and against his Christ]* It is rendered in the Psalm, “and against his Anointed,” which is the proper translation; the term signifying the office of our Saviour, for which he was set apart as the *Lord’s anointed*, commissioned and anointed with the holy unction to be a prophet, priest, and king. Thus the enemies of Christ were the enemies of God.

27. Now the disciples, having repeated the propheey, remark in praise to God, upon its fulfillment, *For of a truth]* Truly. *Thy holy child Jesus]* The word *son*, or *servant*, would perhaps better express the original—thy holy *son* or *servant* Jesus. *Whom thou hast anointed]* The terms *Messiah* and *Christ* both mean anointed. In speaking of our Saviour as the *Anointed*, they declared him to be the *Messiah* whom God had appointed to this office, as kings and priests were installed in their offices, by being anointed with consecrated oil. *Both Herod]* Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, who was tetrarch of Galilee; and being in Jerusalem at the time of our Lord’s trial, Pilate, to relieve himself, perhaps, from responsibility, sent Christ to him to be examined. *Pontius Pilate]* The Roman governor, (see Luke xxiii, 1-12,) without whose assent the execution could not have taken place. *Gentiles, and the people of Israel]* The Roman soldiers and the Jewish multitude gathered together to accomplish and witness the crucifixion.

28. Mr. Wesley thus paraphrases this verse: “But they could do no more than thou wast pleased to permit according to thy determinate *counsel*, to save mankind by the sufferings of thy Son. And what was needful for this end, thou didst before determine to permit to be done.” The twenty-eighth verse may be read as a parenthesis

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30 By stretching forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

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in the twenty-seventh, thus: "Whom thou hast anointed, (for to do whatsoever thy hand, &c.,) both Herod," &c. The term *hand* is synonymous with *power*. *Counsel* means *will, design*. The idea is, that God had not been in the least moved from his plan by the rage and vain attempts of the combined forces of earth. He had permitted them to exhibit their malice to their own destruction, as far as was necessary to accomplish his own great design of mercy, and the remainder of that wrath he had restrained.

29. This verse is paraphrased by Bishop Jebb thus: "And as thy wise counsel predetermined that, through the confederacy of Jews and Gentiles, of kings and rulers, Christ should suffer; so let the same wise counsel be now made conspicuous in the undaunted preaching of Christ crucified." *Behold their threatenings]* Take cognizance of. They rage against thy counsel and design; they would prohibit what thou hast commanded. Their enemies were the enemies of the Most High. *And grant]* Bestow—give. *That with all boldness]* Fearlessly—faithfully—publicly. *Speak thy word]* Preach, as thou hast appointed, thine own truth.

30. *By stretching forth thine hand to heal]* "While thou art stretching forth thy hand, that is, exerting thy power, to heal;" or, "Show that the word we preach is *thy word*, by healing the sick, and confirming it with miracles wrought in the name of Jesus." *By the name of thy holy child Jesus]* Thus giving divine and public attestation that he is the Messiah—the anointed of God.

31. *And when they had prayed]* The prayer was heard, and, upon its close, Almighty God, in a most solemn and glorious manner, signified his acceptance of it. It was a peculiar time. The church was young and comparatively small, and persecutors were many and powerful. The first persecution had transpired; they were now seeking for grace to meet the expected conflict, and threw themselves upon the arm of God. To confirm their faith, and prepare them boldly to preach, He exhibits his mighty power and presence in their midst. *The place was shaken where they were assembled]* By a divine power. This earthquake, or trembling of the place where they were, was the external evidence that God was there, serving to arrest their attention

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

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and confirm their faith. *And they were filled with the Holy Ghost]* What a glorious result again of united, faithful prayer! They had once before received this baptism, but this did not render a fresh outpouring unnecessary. "Though these disciples had received the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, yet they were capable of larger communications. Indeed, one communication of this Spirit always makes way and disposes for another. Neither apostle nor private Christian can subsist in the divine life without frequent influences from on high. Had these disciples depended on their Pentecostal grace, they might have sunk now under the terror and menaces of their combined and powerful foes. God gives grace for the *time being*, but no stock for *futurity*, because he will keep all his followers *continually dependent* on him."—CLARKE. *And they spake the word with boldness]* Why should they not, with the Spirit of the Most High upon them? All fear had fled—they had received a solemn evidence of the approval of God. Confidently now they preach the Messiah. It is the baptism of the Holy Ghost that we want, to give us a power and boldness in preaching and laboring for souls.

32. *The multitude]* Five thousand. Verse 4. *Were of one heart and of one soul]* So firmly were they bound together in affection. "This is a picture of what every Christian church ought to be, and what every Christian church will probably be, when the fullness of the Spirit shall be poured out in the last days, and the consummation of all things arrive. Here we meet with no factions or divisions on the part of the people—no jealousy—no party spirit. No desire of distinction disturbed the pure harmony of the primitive church. The apostles, as the spiritual fathers of God's household, without opposition, superintended all things, and directed the disposal of the extensive and benevolent contributions of the faithful. The first law of their divine Master was fulfilled. Mutual and holy love was the sacred bond of their union—the ruling principle of their life and actions."—TOWNSEND. *Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own]* Did not call them his own. That is, such was their love, that those who had property held it ready to be bestowed as the wants of poorer brethren required. *They had all things in common]* "Not by possession, but as to use." (See Acts ii, 44.) They held their substance to be common property, so far as the necessities of others required. Not making a common stock, or fund,

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

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of all their property, but were always ready to distribute to the wants of suffering brethren; considering, in their love for Christians, that all their property belonged to their brethren, just as far as the necessities of any made it meet that they should share with them.

*33. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection]* The resurrection was their great theme—the subject of their continued discourse; because this important fact, in connection with the prophecies, decided the question of Christ's Messiahship. And this the apostles testified, having seen him and conversed with him after his crucifixion, with extraordinary force. They preached it in the demonstration of the Spirit, for the power of the Holy Ghost was upon them. The term *power* may here refer to miraculous energy, and signify that, by astonishing miracles, performed in the name of Christ, the apostles gave evidence of his resurrection. This is the opinion of Dr. Bloomfield and Dr. Clarke. *And great grace was upon them all]* The word in the original translated *grace*, is the same translated *favor* in Acts ii, 47, where it is said that the disciples *found favor with all the people*; and some commentators have made the same application of the term here, esteeming the idea of the clause to be, that the company of Christians enjoyed, to a large degree, the favorable regards of the people generally; but this hardly seems to do justice to the narration. It seems rather to refer to the especial favor and blessing of God which they enjoyed—a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. A large measure of heavenly grace rested upon them all.

*34. Neither was there any among them that lacked]* That is, there was no one of their number in suffering want. Not that there were none poor, but, such was the generosity of the rich, that the wants of all were supplied. Thus ought the church always to provide for her poor. *For as many as were possessors of houses or lands sold them, &c.]* Dr. Bloomfield remarks that this should not read *as many* as had, but *such* as had; meaning, that some of those who had houses and lands sold them, in order to obtain means to supply the necessities of poor brethren. *And brought the prices, &c.]* Showing that it was voluntary on their part, not absolutely required by the apostles, but a most cheerful and freely offered charity.

35 And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

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*35. And laid them down at the apostles' feet]* The money they obtained for the property sold they *laid at the feet* of the apostles, or committed to their care for distribution; the terms expressing their respect and reverence for them. *And distribution was made unto every man according as he had need]* The apostles were the almoners or distributers of the general fund collected to relieve the necessities of the distressed. It appears evident, from this verse, that there was no common stock made of all the property of the disciples, from which each one, with equal right, should draw his proper allowance, but that it was a temporary and necessary subscription, to meet the immediate wants of the suffering. The fund was intended solely for the poor, and each one gave to it according to his ability and free will.

*36. And Joses, &c.]* This individual is especially mentioned because he was a foreigner and especially liberal, and also because afterward mentioned as a successful preacher of the gospel. Acts xi, 24, 30. He gave his property—himself—his all, to Christ and the church. *Barnabas]* The original Syriac term means, *a son of prophecy*, a preacher, a teacher; and the Greek renders it *a son of exhortation or consolation*, referring to his gifts as a minister of the gospel—his aptness to teach, as well as his power to move and console. This name the apostles gave him. This practice of giving names expressive of character was common. Simon was called Peter and Cephas, or a stone; John and James, Boanerges, or sons of thunder. John i, 44; Mark iii, 17. *A Levite]* Belonging to the tribe of Levi. This tribe was chosen to attend to the duties of the tabernacle and temple. Aaron and his immediate descendants were the priests, and filled the higher offices; while the rest of the tribe, called Levites, discharged the humbler duties. As a tribe they had no inheritance, but were supported at public expense, in cities set apart for their use, and by tithes; but as private individuals, they were allowed to hold property. *And of the country of Cyprus]* Cyprus is an island in the Mediterranean Sea, not far distant from the Jewish coast. The island was the residence of many Jews. Here, probably, was the property of Barnabas. Dr. Clarke observes: "As it is likely that he was one of those strangers that came up to Jerusalem to the late feast, and was there converted, he might have sold his land in the island to some of his own countrymen who were at Jerusalem at this time; and so, being

**37** Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

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called to the work of the ministry, continued to associate with the apostles, traveling everywhere, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. He was the constant companion of St. Paul till the separation took place on account of John Mark, mentioned Acts xv, 36-39." From the chapter we learn—

- I. That sincere piety will accomplish much even without the gift of education, &c.
  - II. That Christians should betake themselves to united prayer in every peculiar exigency.
  - III. We see the powerful effect of such supplication.
1. The Holy Ghost descended and filled their hearts.
  2. Enabled them to offer Christ to the unconverted with boldness.
  3. Secured numerous conversions.
  4. Bound them all together in a bond of strong mutual love.
  5. Destroyed their habitual love for this world's goods.
  6. Relieved the wants of all the suffering.
  7. Secured an abundant and continued shower of heavenly grace upon them.
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## CHAPTER V.

**1.** After that Ananias and Sapphira his wife, for their hypocrisy, at Peter's rebuke, had fallen down dead, 12, and the apostles had wrought many miracles, 14, and many were added to the church, 17, the apostles are again imprisoned, 19, but delivered by an angel, and bidden to preach the gospel boldly. 21. They teach openly in the temple, 29, and before the council, 33, who determine to kill them, but are deterred from this course by the advice of Gamaliel, a noted teacher among them. 40. They therefore beat the apostles and let them go, glorifying God that they are accounted worthy of suffering for Christ's sake.

**B**UT a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

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THE preceding chapter closed with a noted example of sincere benevolence; to obtain the credit of an act so liberal and disinterested, without making the necessary sacrifice, an unworthy couple are tempted to the commission of a most heinous sin, and subjected themselves to a sudden and awful visitation.

**1. A certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife]** This is all we know of them—their names and their sin. It appears that they were both alike depraved, and united together in planning and carrying out this deception. Mr. Wesley thinks they were not believers; "for all that believed 'were of one heart and of one soul.' Probably not bap-

2 And kept back *part* of the price, (his wife also being privy to it,) and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to

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tized; but intending now to offer himself for baptism." *Sold a possession*] Which, from the third verse, we learn to have been land. This they did of their own accord. There was no requirement made; they were playing the hypocrite. They desired to acquire a reputation for exalted benevolence; and they might also have expected that, as they insisted upon the fact that they had given up all their possessions, they would now be maintained at public expense, from the general fund, while they could retain the rest of their property for private purposes.

2. *And kept back part of the price*] "Appropriated part to his own use." Pretending to give the whole, he made this reservation. This was his sin. He might have retained all, or the portion that he did, without incurring guilt; but others were making great sacrifices, and he coveted the praise of men rather than the approval of God. He formally offered the proceeds of all his property to the apostles, while he still held upon a part. He not only reclaimed or stole what he had consecrated to God, but he lied in the very act of the consecration. He offered to God what he still considered as his own. In our consecrations to the Lord let us never permit our lips to belie our hearts! *Privy to it*] Being in the secret, plotting with him. *A certain part*] The agreed portion. He may have called it all he had. *Laid it at the apostles' feet*] Thus professedly devoted all to God.

3. *But Peter said*] Peter must have been suddenly inspired by the Holy Ghost, as he could not otherwise have known the secret purpose of Ananias. How vain to attempt to deceive God! Man may be imposed upon; but the eye of Omnipotence is never closed. *Why hath Satan filled thy heart*] The Scriptures attribute sudden and powerful temptations to the agency of Satan or the devil. Thus, in the case of Judas, recorded in Luke xxii, 3, and John xiii, 17, it is said that *Satan entered into him*. If there were no devil, as some at the present day teach, how strange that, under the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, Peter should assert his personality and present act of temptation! The term, *filled thy heart*, may be translated, *instigated, excited, impelled*; implying, also, a yielding to the temptation. It expresses a state of the mind entirely under the control of the evil one, which has submitted to his temptations, and become an instrument to carry out his evil suggestions. The temptation of the devil does by no means excuse a man for the

lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?

4 While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

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commission of a sin to which he is tempted, because the tempter is powerless except in a willing mind. He can only *enter into* and fill the heart of that man who keeps the door of his mind wide open to receive evil suggestions and thoughts. The sin consists in *yielding* to temptation, not in being tempted. We are told in James iv, 7, that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us. In John viii, 44, he is styled the *father of lies*, and in this case he shows himself worthy of the appellation. *To lie to the Holy Ghost*] To deceive, or impose upon the Holy Ghost. The apostles acted under the direction and inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and, in attempting to deceive them, Ananias at the same time sought to impose upon the divine Spirit. "It was a distrust of his power, an endeavor to discover if the secret things of the heart were manifest to Him." Doddridge calls it an affront directly leveled at the Holy Ghost himself in the midst of his astonishing train of extraordinary operations. *To keep back*] To retain— withhold. Dr. Clarke observes that the Greek word is used to signify *purloining public money*. The property was no longer theirs; they professedly gave it up to the public fund; and they as really purloined it as if they had stolen what was already there.

4. *While it remained*] "Remained unsold," unappropriated to charitable purposes. *Was it not thine own?*] Equal to a positive affirmation. It then belonged to thee. It might innocently have been retained; the gift to God was altogether voluntary on thy part. *And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?*] "At thy disposal." The proceeds, the money, was in his hand, still to be retained in whole, or in part, if he pleased, and without sin. The apostle mentions this to show how aggravated his crime was. He was driven to it by no express command; it was an unmitigated, barefaced sin, voluntarily commenced and carried through to its completion. *Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart?*] Why hast thou *deliberated upon it, planned, and determined?* Why hast thou fairly yielded thy heart to Satan, and entered into his devices, determining to carry them out? *Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God*] In the verse preceding this, Peter assures Ananias that he has lied against the Holy Ghost; in this verse, his offense is represented as being against God. This is a very clear proof that the Holy

5 And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down, and gave up the ghost. And great fear came on all them that heard these things.

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Ghost is *God*. (Compare John iii, 6; 1 John v, 4; Matt. ix, 38; with Acts xiii, 4: 2 Tim. iii, 16; with 2 Peter i, 21; John vi, 45; 1 Cor. ii, 13; Rev. ii, 23.) It was peculiarly a lie unto God the Spirit, because he now filled and inspired the apostles. His presence the Saviour had promised when he ascended, and in the fulfillment of this he had come in power on the day of Pentecost, and remained with them. It was the influence of the Spirit that had induced this benevolence in the hearts of the sincere Christians, who made a disposal of their property upon the church; and upon the Spirit thus operating, Ananias had imposed. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to discover the thoughts of the heart, (1 Cor. ii, 10,) and this is the peculiar work of the divine Being. 1 Chron. xxviii, 9. They sinned against this searching power of the Holy Ghost, who must be God, as God alone can search the heart. Jer. xvii, 10.

5. *Hearing these words]* Unable to answer, conscious of guilt, exposed to all, the secret purposes of his heart disclosed. *Fell down]* "Falling down," struck by the divine hand. *Gave up the ghost]* Expired, died, under a direct visitation of divine Providence. "This severity was not only righteous, considering that complication of vain-glory and covetousness, of fraud and impiety, which the action contained; but, on the whole, was wise and gracious, both as it served to vindicate the honor of the blessed Spirit, so notoriously affronted by this attempt to impose on those who had been so lately and eminently anointed by his extraordinary effusion; and, further, as it tended most effectually to deter any dishonest persons from joining the Christians merely for the sake of obtaining a charitable support from the poor fund, to which, by a fraud like this, many might, on easy terms, have purchased a pretence, who would also, no doubt, have proved a great scandal to a profession taken up on such infamous motives. This, likewise, was a very convincing attestation of the apostles' most upright conduct in the management of the sums with which they were intrusted, and, in general, of their divine mission: for none can imagine that Peter would have had the assurance to pronounce, much less the power to execute, such a sentence as this, had he been guilty of fraud, or belied the Holy Ghost in his pretensions to be under miraculous influence and direction."—DODDRIDGE. *And great fear came on all them that heard these things]* A sudden death is always an event of a solemn nature, impressing all acquainted with the circumstances; but such a death as this, result-

6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out, and buried *him*.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

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ing from a peculiar and heinous sin, by an immediate stroke of God, would naturally excite awe and terror.

6. *And the young men arose, &c.]* The dead were buried as soon as possible after their demise, among the Jews, owing to the rapidity with which, in that country, corruption takes place. The dead are always buried on the same day, unless the death occurs near night, and then the burial transpires early the succeeding day. But this was a peculiar case; the circumstances required a speedy burial; there was no question of his death; his corpse could not but have been offensive; and the same judgment awaited his wife for her equal participation in his guilt. These *young men* were the younger part of the men present. Bloomfield remarks, that it was customary for the *younger* men of the Christian church to perform, perhaps in rotation, the more laborious offices in the congregation, which were at so early a period not appropriated to *particular persons*, and, consequently, the persons performing those offices were not likely to have any distinctive name of office. Coffins are not used in the East, the corpse being wrapped in a winding sheet, and spices wound up with the body, and thus laid away in the tomb. In an emergency, like the present, the ordinary mantle worn by the person would serve for a winding sheet if no other were near.

7. *And it was about the space of three hours after]* Probably at the next hour of public prayer. *His wife, not knowing what was done]* It may seem surprising, at first, that no one informed his wife of the event, or that it did not in some way come to her knowledge. It may be that Peter, divinely inspired, knew of the equal guilt of the wife, and commanded that she should not be informed of the awful occurrence. And, besides, the terror excited by the event, and the natural suspicion of his wife, would render them unwilling to see her, while the burial would require a considerable portion of that time. "It is not the manner," says Mr. Ripley, "of Luke to enter into details of subordinate circumstances. He faithfully relates the principal and important facts—those which it was proper to keep on record."

8. *And Peter answered unto her]* "Addressed her." *Whether ye sold the land for so much?* For such a sum—probably mentioning the

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out.

10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost. And the young men came in, and found her dead, and carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her husband.

11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

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amount stated by her husband. She answers in the affirmative, thus signifying her acquaintance with the deceit, and her equal guilt.

9. *Agreed together*] United, conspired. *To tempt the Spirit of the Lord*] To try whether the Spirit of God would detect their deceit and hypocrisy. Not that they hoped to deceive the divine Spirit, or to discover whether the apostles were under his guidance; but such was their blindness and perversity, their vain-glory and selfishness, that they risk this discovery, run the hazard, as if it were possible, in some way, to escape the searching eye of God; or as if, by some means, they might avoid the consequences. Sin blinds a man, and makes him reckless, presumptuous, and forgetful of its fearful penalty. Little do the ungodly ones of earth, who are now sinning with a high hand and outstretched arm, neglecting the commands of God, trampling upon his law, rejecting Christ, reflect upon the awful truth, that "the wages of sin is death." They are tempting God, presuming upon his mercy, venturing, because he forbears, to sin, and vainly hoping to escape. *Behold the feet of them*] The persons; the Hebrews often expressing a man by some member of his body. *Are at the door*] Near at hand: perhaps just returned from without the walls of the city, where the dead were buried. *Shall carry thee out*] Shall bury thee.

10. *Then fell she down straightway at his feet, &c.*] By the same divine judgment she followed her husband. It was not the threat of Peter, (as what he said was but a prediction of what would happen,) nor in answer to a prayer of his, nor shame, nor remorse, that caused their death: it was a direct interposition of God. What Peter said was under the direction of the Spirit, and their death was immediate.

11. *And great fear came upon all*] A repetition of what is said in the fifth verse, the horror of the former occurrence being enhanced by the death of Sapphira. The intended effect of the judgment was thus accomplished upon both the church and the people generally—a reverential awe and wholesome fear of God, inducing careful self-examination, and sincerity of purpose on the part of the church, and

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.)

13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

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saving her from the ingress of impostors, hypocrites, and fraudulent persons, who, for sordid motives, on account of the liberality of rich Christians, would have sought to unite with them, and who would have hindered her usefulness, and distracted her counsels. A marked exhibition of the thorough, heart-searching purity of the requirements of the gospel of Christ was also given. It may be worthy of notice, that not long after the establishment of the Mosaic dispensation two persons, Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, were struck dead for presuming to perform duties not assigned to them—trifling with the commands and presence of God. Lev. x, 1-5. Mr. Ripley makes the following profitable remarks upon this awful occurrence:—“How eminently did the events just related show ‘that lying lips are an abomination to the Lord!’ Prov. xii, 22. How useless is deception, particularly in reference to religious matters! Iniquity cannot be concealed from God; and if the honor of his cause so require, he can at any moment expose and punish insincerity. For secrecy in sin is no defense from the eye or the hand of God. His ‘eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.’ Prov. xv, 3; compare Psalm cxxxix, 11, 12. Union in sin gives no security to the transgressor: ‘Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.’ Prov. xi, 21.”

12. *And by the hands of the apostles]* That is, by the apostles. Dr. Clarke thinks this clause of the twelfth verse should immediately precede the fifteenth, it having been, as he supposes, transposed. (See verse 15.) *And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch]* The apostles and the company of believers are here referred to. They had become so large that no private dwelling could contain them; they therefore resort to a convenient part of the temple—that portion called Solomon's porch. (See note on Acts iii, 11.)

13. *And of the rest]* The rest of the worshipers in the temple who were not believers or Christians. Some suppose it to refer to the rich—the scribes and Pharisees, who kept aloof, while the common people received them gladly. *No man joined himself to them]* They did not venture, as the context shows, to come near, to approach them, for interference or otherwise, through the awe produced by the late occurrence. Or perhaps it may mean, did not dare join themselves in false pretences, like Ananias and Sapphira. *The people*

14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women ;)

15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets,

*magnified them]* The people at large, as distinguished from the rulers and chief men, held them in great reverence.

14. *Believers were the more added to the Lord]* Called believers because they credited and relied upon the testimony of the apostles, and trusted in the Messiah, the crucified Jesus, for salvation. They were added, not merely by profession, to the church, the company of Christians, but, by living faith, *to the Lord*. They became a portion of his mystical body—*one with him*—united as the branch is to the vine. Disciplining the church when it is really needed will always have a good effect upon the success of the church—the cutting off of these impure persons secured the accession of multitudes of soundly converted persons. There is no real contradiction between the preceding verse and this. In one it is said : “ Of the rest durst no man join himself to them ;”—in the fourteenth : “ And believers were the more added to the Lord.” The first, as before stated, may refer to the rulers, who kept aloof while the people generally believed ; or it may read, as is probably the true meaning, None dared to interfere with them, to impose upon them, or to unite with them through selfish and unworthy motives ; while multitudes, thoroughly convicted of sin and converted to Christ, were added to the church.

15. *Insomuch that they brought forth]* This verse Dr. Clarke and Dr. Townsend think should be immediately connected with the first clause of the twelfth, and esteems the following transposition to be the correct reading of the passage :—

Verse 11. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

Verse 13. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them ; but the people magnified them.

Verse 14. And believers were the more added to the Lord, both men and women.

Verse 12. (Last clause.) And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch.

Verse 12. (First clause.) And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people ;

Verse 15. Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, &c.

By throwing the intervening verses into brackets, commencing with the last clause of the twelfth and ending with the fourteenth, thus making a parenthesis of it, nearly the same result is accomplished

and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

16 There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed every one.

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with

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without any transposition. They brought the sick into the streets that they might be more accessible to the apostles, and that they might make direct application to them for miraculous relief. *And laid them on beds and couches]* The former term denotes the more costly and elegantly furnished beds of the rich; the latter a mean and inferior article, coarse and hard, barely covered with a skin, upon which the poorest classes laid. The different terms show the varied classes that flocked to the apostles to be healed of their diseases—the wealthy as well as the humble poor. *The shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them]* This was the impression of the multitude, that if they could not reach Peter, so that he might lay his hands upon them, if his shadow could but pass over them they would be healed. There is no intimation given in the text that this was a suggestion of the apostle, or that any one *was healed* by such a course; but such was the veneration excited by the apostle, and such his power to heal in the name of Christ, that they supposed his passing shadow would accomplish it. There is no impossibility in believing that they were healed, not by any inherent virtue in Peter; but according to their faith in the divine energy that inspired him, it was even so unto them. Thus the woman that our Lord healed reasoned: “If I may but touch his garment I shall be whole.” Matt. ix, 20, 21. And it is stated of the apostle Paul, that God wrought remarkable cures through handkerchiefs and aprons which had been applied to his body. Acts xix, 11, 12. Our Lord had assured his apostles that greater things than they had seen him accomplish should they do, because he should go to the Father and send the power of the Holy Spirit down upon them.

16. *There came also a multitude out of the cities round about Jerusalem]* Hearing reports of the extraordinary occurrences in the temple and city, and the wonderful healing power of the apostles. *Vexed with unclean spirits]* Possessed with devils—tormented, afflicted by them. They were differently affected, it is evident, from the sick, for these are mentioned before. They brought sick folks, and another most distressed and afflicted company, who, in the clear, unmistaken language of Scripture, were vexed or possessed with unclean spirits, or demons.

17. *Then the high priest]* Probably Caiaphas, as the act was in keep-

him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

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ing with his character, he having been the most active instigator of the death of Christ. John xi, 49, 50. It seems, from what is here said, that he was a Sadducee; and from Josephus we learn that some of the high priests, as well as most of the persons of rank, were of this sect. *Rose up]* Began to bestir himself—take active measures for the suppression of the new sect. *And all they that were with him]* Those who were of his party or belief in the Sanhedrim. *Which is of the sect of the Sadducees]* There was a bitter contention between the Pharisees and Sadducees; and as members of both sects were in the council, the Sadducees would be likely to move in a body with their leader, and the Pharisees be less conspicuous in their opposition to the Christians, especially as the principal matter of accusation against them involved the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, which the Pharisees believed, and for which they contended with the Sadducees. The preaching of Jesus and *his resurrection* from the dead, and a coming judgment, was therefore exceedingly offensive to the latter, who believed in no resurrection, or future punishment of the wicked. As multitudes were daily flocking to the apostles, and their views were widely spreading, the anger of the impetuous Sadducean high priest and his party in the Sanhedrim was roused. *Sect]* Opinion. The original word means simply *choice*: they had *chosen* this view of doctrines rather than another. It is the same word from which the English term *heresy* is derived, which, by Papal usage, has come to be used only in an offensive way. Those who first bore the title *chose* to think for themselves; took up, *from choice*, a different view of *infallibility, purgatory, &c.*, and were called, on this account, *heretics*. *Filled with indignation]* Greek, *zeal—with fervor, implying also wrath, malice.*

18. *Laid their hands]* Arrested them. *Common prison]* In the public prison.

19. *But the angel of the Lord by night]* The article is not in the original, and the sentence is more correctly translated *an angel of the Lord*. That an angel was sent by the Lord, and the prison doors opened in a miraculous manner, is evident; for, had they been burst open by an earthquake or tempest, or had their friends attempted their release, as some enemies to the inspiration of the Bible pretend,

20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

then would the prison guards have been able to account for the absence of the prisoners; but the keepers were found standing guard in their stations, believing that their prisoners were safe, and all the doors were closed. Had it not been a miraculous occurrence, the apostles would not have been so mildly treated by the council as they were when found again preaching, with the same boldness, in the temple. Their enemies were overawed by this extraordinary event. By supposition of a miracle, only, can we account for the speech of Gamaliel, so full of wise counsel and moderation, and whose advice was immediately adopted. Verses 35-40. That it was an intelligent spirit, sent by God on this occasion, is evident from the account of the occurrence. The angel speaks to Peter, directs him as to his future course, and this word Peter strictly obeys. How this was done without the notice of the guard, we may not explain. As once again the prison doors were opened by a divine messenger, so now He, with whom nothing is impossible, commissioned his angel to work this miracle. The guards might have been thrown into a stupor while the gates were opened, the apostles released, the prison closed, and remained all the while unconscious of what was passing. The reasons for this miracle at this time may be—

1. To convince the apostles and disciples of the special providence of God exercised over them, and the omnipotence of him in whom they trusted.
2. It would tend powerfully to impress the minds of their enemies with respect for them and their doctrines, as men who were under the especial care, and subjects of the miraculous interposition, of God.
3. It would show the rulers that, in their attempt to crush the apostles, they were fighting against God, and that their efforts must be hopeless.

20. *All the words of this life]* All the doctrines of the gospel—truths which, when received and obeyed, secure eternal life. Thus Peter says to the Saviour, “To whom shall we go but unto thee; thou hast the words of eternal life.” The religion of Christ gives life to those who “are dead in trespasses and sins.” It supplies them with a continued spiritual life—the life of faith—and secures to them eternal life beyond the tomb. For preaching the resurrection they were imprisoned; but now they were to go again into the temple, the most public place, and boldly preach eternal life, as brought to light in the gospel and by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

21 And when they heard *that*, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

24 Now, when the high priest, and the captain of the temple, and the chief priests, heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

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21. *Early in the morning*] Original, "At daybreak." They immediately obeyed the word of God, without hesitation or fear of the consequences. When duty evidently calls we should follow, trusting in God, however great the dangers we may encounter. The devout Jews were accustomed to wait early in the temple for their devotions. Luke xxi, 38; John viii, 2. The morning is a peculiarly favorable hour for religious exercises and prayerful reflection; the mind is clear, strong, and unburdened with daily cares. *The high priest came*] To the council chamber, which was in, or near, the temple. *And they that were with him*] His friends and partisans. (See verse 17.) *And all the senate of the children of Israel*] All the *elders*, as the original signifies, of Israel. In addition to the council, as a grave matter was to come before them, they call in the chiefs—men of note, age, and influence among the people.

22. *When the officers came*] Those sent by the council, holding an office like our constable.

23. *The prison truly found we shut, &c.*] They found the prison shut, and everything safe, so that it could not have been broken open. And besides, the keepers were all in their places, unconscious of what had occurred.

24. *Captain of the temple*] (See note on Acts iv, 1.) *Chief priests*] The heads of the divisions of the sacerdotal classes. 1 Chron. xxiv. *They doubted of them whereunto this would grow*] They did not know what to think of it. They were astonished, and could not conceive how the apostles had escaped, or what would be the end of this marvelous occurrence.

25. *Then came, &c.*] In the midst of their perplexity it was announced to them that these same prisoners were now preaching in the temple.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

27 And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them,

28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this name? and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

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26. *Without violence, &c.]* Merely presenting the orders of the council for their appearance, and requesting their obedience, not binding or forcing them; for the multitude were around them, eager to hear their words, and were convinced of their sacred character. Any insult or injury inflicted upon them would have been immediately resisted by the people, who esteemed them prophets. Violence would have been unnecessary, for the religion of the apostles taught them not to resist authority, but to submit themselves for conscience' sake, and suffer injury rather than do a wrong. And the apostles were not unwilling to have another opportunity of preaching before the council.

27. *Set them before the council]* Placed them in the presence of the members in the centre of the room, before them all.

28. *Did we not straitly command, &c.]* (See Acts iv, 17, 18.) *In this name]* In the name of Jesus, as his disciples, and still teaching by his authority, implying thus his Messiahship, and the sin of the rulers in his death. *Ye have filled Jerusalem]* This was intended to be an accusation against them, but it was the highest compliment they could have paid the apostles, thus to speak of their diligence and great success. *And intend to bring this man's blood upon us]* That is, they accuse the apostles of bringing the responsibility of an innocent man's death, and he the Messiah, upon them. It was true enough that the apostle had charged home upon them the death of Christ, but not as they would insinuate, in such a manner as to enrage the people against their rulers, and bring them into danger. What they had said of this matter they had spoken in their presence. Acts iii and iv. They had referred to it in a spirit of tenderness, attributing it to their ignorance, and assuring them of forgiveness. Conscience was evidently at work in the bosom of these councilors. It may be they now recollect the cry that went up from the lips of the multitude, in which they joined, "His blood be on us, and on our children;" and they felt no small uneasiness, in view of the remarkable occurrences of late, and especially on account of the last miracle, and the effect it must have upon the people.

29 Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree:

31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

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29. *Then Peter and the other apostles answered]* Peter spoke in their behalf, or they, in some way, assented to what he said. *We ought to obey God rather than man]* The same answer, in substance, that they had once before made. (See Acts iv, 19.) They had received their commission from on high; God had divinely attested it by noted miracles. The very night preceding, their commission had been renewed by an angelic messenger. They could not doubt their call of God to this office, and they speak a great truth when they say, *We ought*; it is right, it is *necessary*, that we should obey God, let the consequence be as it may, rather than man.

30. *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus]* They were accused of sedition in preaching Jesus. Peter now enters into their defense against this charge. He has assumed that the authority of God was supreme, and now proceeds to show that Jesus was sent of God, and they were the authorized witnesses of his sufferings, death, and his power and willingness to save. The God they and their fathers worshiped had raised up from the dead, or constituted, appointed, Christ in this way to be the world's Saviour. *Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree]* Whom ye put to death by hanging him upon, or nailing him to, a cross; the word translated *hanged*, means *to dispatch, to kill*; and the term translated *tree*, signifies *wood, a post, a gibbet*, and refers to the cross of wood upon which he was crucified. Thus says Peter in his First Epistle, ii, 24, of the Saviour, that he "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Acts x, 39; Gal. iii, 13.

31. *Him hath God exalted with his right hand]* Or *to his* right hand: raised him from the dead to an exalted seat of honor—a convincing testimony of his Messiahship. *To be a Prince and a Saviour]* (See Acts iii, 15.) He was to be the supreme ruler in his spiritual and everlasting kingdom, and, as a Saviour, save his people from their sins. Matt. i, 21. Mr. Benson adds the following remark to this passage: "Observe, reader, we cannot have Christ to be our Saviour unless we be willing to take him to be our Ruler. We cannot be redeemed and healed by him unless we give up ourselves to be governed by him. His saving us, is in order to his ruling us." *To give repentance]* To produce, or be the cause of repentance through the preaching of his gospel. To give a space and opportunity for repent-

32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is also* the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

33 When they heard *that*, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

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ance, and bestow the necessary grace to soften and melt the heart. *To Israel]* The Jews. Peter was now addressing the Jews, to whom the gospel was first offered, according to the direction of our Lord. As wicked as they had been in the death of the Messiah, still, as their Prince and Saviour, he has secured for them, as well as for all sinners, pardon and the remission of sins through his blood. *The forgiveness of sins]* Such was the exalted character of Christ, and the merit of his atonement, that he had the power to remit the penalty of sin to all who believed in him, both Jew and Gentile, they being truly contrite for them. Repentance is here called a *gift* of Christ, because, by his death, he has rendered repentance possible, and pardon accessible to all. He also sends the Holy Spirit, by whose influence alone the heart is broken and rendered truly penitent. The Spirit is given to all that seek him, producing repentance, and securing forgiveness of sin and the new birth. Repentance is also the act of man; for he seeks the blessing of the Spirit, breaks off from his evil courses, and obeys the word of God, working out his own salvation, while the Spirit of God worketh in him and with him.

32. *We are his witnesses of these things]* Of his resurrection and ascension, of his doctrines and miracles; for this we were appointed, Luke xxiv, 48; and we speak that which we have heard and seen. *And so is also the Holy Ghost]* By his remarkable presence he has fulfilled the prophecy of the Scriptures and of Christ, and thus testified to his Messiahship; and by his filling our hearts, and the miracles he has wrought through us, he has witnessed to our truth, and to the truth of the gospel we preach. *To them that obey him]* The apostles and disciples—the company of Christians who had received Christ—all had been sealed by the Holy Spirit. To those that now obey him, and submit wholly to Christ as their Prophet, Priest, and King, does the Holy Spirit bear its testimony: “for the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.”

33. *They were cut to the heart]* The original means, *to be sawn through*. They were not filled with penitence and grief of heart in view of their sins; but by this bold charge of the murder of Christ made to their faces, they were stung to the heart, and “were filled with fury, and, as it were, gnashed their teeth—a metaphor taken from gnashing the teeth as one draws a saw.” *Took counsel to slay them]* Determined at once, as if their minds were made up. With-

34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men:

36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to

out even sending the prisoners out for deliberation, (Acts iv, 15,) they (probably the high priest's party more especially) were bent at once upon their ruin.

34. *A Pharisee, named Gamaliel]* The Pharisees believed in a resurrection, and earnestly disputed this doctrine with their opponents. While the high priest and his party are impetuously hurrying on the condemnation of the prisoners, as no small cause of their present arrest was their preaching the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, a noted and learned Pharisee, a member of the council, stands up to speak, and offers the following cautious and praiseworthy advice.

There are three noted persons bearing this name mentioned in the records of the Jews; and it is the general opinion that he was the first bearing the title of Rabban Gamaliel, *the elder*—the others being his descendants. He is believed to have been the grandson of the celebrated Hillel, son of Simeon, who took the Saviour in his arms and blessed him, (Luke ii, 25-34,) and uncle of Nicodemus. He was for thirty-two years president of the Jewish Sanhedrim. Though he is represented to have lived some twenty-two years after these events, long enough to have convinced himself, according to his own test, that Christianity was from God, yet we have no account but that he lived and died a Pharisee. How strange, often, is the contrast between a man's precept and practice! *A doctor of the law]* He was a teacher and an expounder of the Jewish law. Familiar with the inspired books, and well acquainted with the law of Moses, and the ancient traditions, he gave decision in cases upon difficult questions arising from these sources. The apostle Paul was one of his pupils. Acts xxii, 3. He seems to have had no small celebrity among the Jews for his knowledge and weight of character. *Commanded]* Advised. *To put the apostles forth a little space]* To permit them to retire, lead them out of the council chamber, while they deliberated.

35. *Take heed to yourselves]* Beware—avoid a hasty decision—look well to your judgment. *What ye intend to do as touching these men]* Or what ye intend to do to them. They had already determined upon their death.

36. *Theudas]* This was a common name among the Jews, and several bearing it led insurrections in these troublous times. Jo-

be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to naught.

37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

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sephus mentions one of this name, some years later, who raised a rebellion, and was destroyed, with all his forces, by the Roman procurator. Some have supposed this to be the same as the one mentioned by Luke, and that Josephus had made an error in chronology. Others suppose him to have been the same as Judas, two names being common among the Jews, who is mentioned by Josephus as leading a revolt in Galilee, a little after the death of Herod the Great. It is of but little consequence, however, to attempt so nice a harmony between Josephus and St. Luke, in reference to this matter, as the Jewish historian does not pretend to record all the insurrectionary movements that were started in the disturbed and tumultuous times succeeding the death of Herod the Great, but remarks that there were, "at this time, ten thousand other disorders in Judea." He passes over the first Theudas, it may be, on account of the insignificance of his revolt. Gamaliel mentions it as something they all were familiar with, and affording a good illustration of his idea. *Boasting himself to be somebody]* Pretending to be some great personage—a prophet—a great leader, or perhaps the Messiah. *Brought to naught]* The revolt was entirely quelled, and his deceived companions disbanded and dispersed.

37. *Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing]* For his tyranny and mal-administration, Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great, was deposed from the kingdom of Judea, and the government was entirely changed: this was in the twelfth year of Christ. From this time Judea became a Roman province, and was attached to Syria, and governed by a Roman proeurator. Quirinus, or Cyrenius, as he is called by St. Luke, was then president of Syria; and he caused the property of the several provincs, Judea among the rest, under his charge, to be enrolled, preparatory to taxation, and levied a tribute upon them. This, of course, would be particularly offensive to the proud Jews, although they were, in fact, before a Roman province, yet they had a nominal king. This change, and the tax, destroyed the last exhibition of independence, and a great revolt immediately sprung up in Galilee, under the direction of one Judas, and Sadoe, a Pharisee, who is called by Josephus a Gaulonite, probably from his having been born or residing awhile in the region of Gaulonites.

38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught:

39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

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These insurgents held that it was not lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, or submit to the Romans; that God was their only Sovereign, and they should call no man Lord. They were also called, on account of their enthusiasm, Zealots, suffering death or torture rather than paying the assessed tax. It was in view of these opinions that the inquiry was made of our Lord whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar. (See Matt. xxii, 17-21.) The heads of the rebellion were destroyed; but the spirit of revolt was never laid in Galilee, though the most bloody vengeance was taken upon them by the Roman procurators. (See Luke xiii, 1.) Both of these leaders had soon come to an unhappy end, and their misguided hands had been scattered; and now Gamaliel is about to bring out his general principle, introduced by these illustrations—that a divine Providence controls all these events—that evil, and evil men, cannot prosper—that in a very short time, even if no-one opposes them, impostors will work out, under the Almighty judgments, their own ruin: such, undoubtedly, would be the fate of their present prisoners if they were deceivers.

38. *Refrain from these men]* Do not meddle with them, or seek to restrain them; maltreat them not. *Let them alone]* Leave them in the hands of Providence. Let them bring about their own destruction, which must follow if they are in error, or demonstrate the truth. *If this counsel or this work]* This plan and design of theirs. *Be of men]* Merely a human scheme, an imposition. *It will come to naught]* Soon fail.

39. *Be of God]* Of divine institution, as they preach. Probably Gamaliel might have been struck with their calm and heavenly deportment, their noble and authoritative defense, and have been more or less convinced of their truth. *Haply]* Perhaps—it may be. *To fight against God]* To resist the divine will and purpose. If it is from him, how vain to resist Omnipotence! How unequal the contest between good and evil! How strong is the church when she trusts in her almighty Defender! No weapon that is formed against her can prosper. How prophetic was the language of Gamaliel! *Ye cannot overthrow it]* The Jews attempted it—kings of the earth have since made the attempt—infidel minds have measured their strength against its mighty bulwarks; but to them all speaks this oracle truly, “Ye cannot overthrow it.”

40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

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40. *To him they agreed]* Not to kill or imprison them. His reputation, and the evident wisdom of his advice, would secure this in part, although still they could not wholly refrain from punishing them. *Beaten them]* Perhaps they administered this punishment—a severe and ignominious infliction, consisting usually of thirty-nine lashes—lest their authority should seem to be resisted with impunity. They had forbidden the apostles to preach, and had arrested them for a breach of this command: to save their own honor, as well as to make an impression hostile to the apostles upon the people, they administer this disgraceful punishment.

41. *Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame]* A blessed spirit do these apostles manifest, exhibiting the wonderful power of grace upon their hearts. They do not murmur at their punishment, though they are innocent; express no rage against their malicious judges; neither are they in the least fearful, or driven from their purpose to preach Christ, by their early and severe experience of the power and cruelty of their enemies. They feel no false shame under their ignominious punishment, but rather glory that they are so highly honored as to be permitted to suffer for their Master's sake. They rejoice because an especial blessing had been pronounced by Jesus Christ upon those who suffered for righteousness' sake: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." Matt. v, 11, 12. When we suffer for our sins, we should be overwhelmed with shame; but, as says Peter, (1 Peter iv, 16,) "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." *Counted worthy]* Esteemed fit, on account of their faithfulness to Christ, by the council. *Suffer shame]* A shameful punishment. *For his name]* On account of preaching salvation and working miracles in his name and by his authority.

42. *And daily in the temple]* At the hours of prayer, when the people gathered there for devotion. *And in every house]* In private houses, thus going from house to house, wherever they could find access, they teach the doctrines of the kingdom. *Teach and preach*

*Jesus Christ]* Teach his doctrines—set forth his life, death, and resurrection, the object of his coming, the necessity of repentance and faith in him; and then press their hearers, by arguments and entreaties, to an immediate belief in him unto salvation.

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## CHAPTER VI.

1. The Grecian Christians murmur against the Hebrews, esteeming that their poor are neglected in the distribution of the funds for the destitute; 3, the apostles, therefore, appoint seven men of good report to take the entire charge of this matter, and give themselves wholly to their appropriate work. 5. Among these was Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost, and a powerful preacher. 9. Certain members of the foreign synagogues attempt to dispute with him concerning the gospel, but are confounded in the argument; 12, they, therefore, excite a popular tumult against him, and hurry him before the Sanhedrim, 13, falsely accusing him of blasphemy; 15, but his innocence shone out conspicuously in his countenance as they gazed upon him.

AND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto*

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1. *And in those days]* Soon after the events recorded in the preceding chapter. *A murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews]* Original, *Hellenists*. These were foreign Jews, who were born and resided in Grecian cities, and spake the Grecian tongue. They had come up to Jerusalem, probably, to attend the feast, and, being converted to Christianity, chose to sojourn there rather than return immediately to their native cities. The Hebrews were the native-born Jews who spoke the language of Palestine—Syro-Chaldee. This seems to have been the matter in dispute. Under the benevolent impulses of the Holy Spirit the wealthy converts, both Jews and Greeks, had contributed liberally to a common fund for the support of the poor, with the intention that it should be distributed equally among all the needy cases. Mosheim and the best commentators are of the opinion that distributers of this bounty were appointed from among the Hebrews, who had care of the fund, and to whom appeals for relief were made. Either with or without sufficient reason, suspicion arose among the *Hellenists*, or foreign Jews, that partiality was shown in the distribution, and that their necessitous widows did not receive their due proportion of relief, while the native Jews were liberally supplied. *In the daily ministration]* Daily distribution. Acts iv, 35.

2. *The twelve]* The twelve apostles. *The multitude of the disciples]*

*them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch,

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The church generally. *It is not reason]* It is not proper or fitting that our office, which is of so much more importance, should be hindered to attend to these minor cases. *Leave the word of God]* Interrupt or neglect our business of preaching the gospel, which is indeed the *word of God*. *Serve tables]* Attend to the daily wants of the poor—see that their tables are provided from the general fund.

3. *Look ye out among you]* Choose carefully from your number. *Honest report]* Men noted for their honesty and probity. *Full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom]* Eminently pious, and entirely devoted to the gospel; and, withal, prudent and discriminating in managing business transactions. Some pious men are most miserable financiers. The wisest, as well as most devout, should be appointed to manage the necessary business of the church. *Whom we may appoint]* Confirm and set apart to the management of this business.

4. *But we will give ourselves, &c.]* We will constantly and steadfastly give ourselves to prayer, and, as it may also imply, to religious meditation, preparatory to public teaching. Mr. Wesley remarks: “This is doubtless the proper business of a Christian bishop, (or pastor,) to speak to God in prayer; to men, in preaching his word, as ambassador for Christ.”

5. This suggestion met with general approbation, and they nominate seven who are all Hellenists, or foreign Jews, the original Jewish distributers probably being united with them. *Stephen]* Who soon gave eminent evidence of his being filled with the Holy Ghost, and a man of extraordinary ability. The church, however, soon lost the benefit of his wisdom, as he enjoyed the high honor of being the first martyr. (See Acts viii.) *Philip]* A preacher also, who is mentioned (Acts viii, 5) as laboring with much success in Samaria. *Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch]* That is, he was a Gentile Greek, who, having become a proselyte, or being converted to the Jewish faith, afterward embraced the gospel of Christ, and united himself with the early church. Antioch was a city of Syria, situated on the river Orontes.

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their hands* on them.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexan-

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It was here that the disciples were first called Christians. (See Acts xi, 26.)

6. *Whom they set before the apostles*] Presented to them for their blessing, as their choice, and every way worthy of their office. *They laid their hands on them*] In this way investing them with the responsibilities of their office. It was customary among the Jews thus to induct into office. (See Gen. xlvi, 14; Num. xxvii, 18, 19.) In this way, also, the apostles were wont instrumentally to convey the blessing of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples, Acts viii, 17; xix, 6; and it may be on this occasion, to fit them every way for their duties, the miraculous influences of the Spirit were imparted. We are informed in the eighth verse that Stephen "did great wonders and miracles among the people."

7. *And the word of God increased*] The doctrines of the gospel were widely spread. *A great company of the priests*] And this is the more remarkable, as they had been among the most virulent opposers and persecutors of Christ and the apostles, and denounced his miracles; but under the preaching of these men, endowed with the Holy Spirit, they are slain, and submit to the gospel. "From this we may learn," says Dr. Clarke, "that it is not by *miracles* that sinners are to be converted to God, but by the *preaching of Christ dying for their offenses*, and rising again for their *justification*." *Obedient to the faith*] Obeyed the gospel requirements, to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

8. *Full of faith and power*] With unwavering confidence in God, and on that account fearless while in the path of duty, and also full of confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore prepared everywhere to preach him, and being endowed with "power from on high," and thus enabled to work miracles.

9. *The synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines*] There were four hundred and eighty synagogues in Jerusalem, and probably the Jews from foreign cities had their own synagogue by themselves, where they met together. This would probably, and almost necessarily, be the case from their various dialects, peculiar interests

drians, and of them of Cilicia, and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

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and sympathies, and the disrespect with which foreign Jews were regarded by the native born. Of the Libertines here mentioned, many opinions have been held. The most plausible seems to be, that the name was derived from their peculiar state and condition. It is a Roman term, and an acquaintance with Roman customs throws some light upon it. Among them, a person who had been a slave and had obtained his freedom was called *libertus*; and his child, born after his freedom, was called *libertinus*, the plural of which is the word here used. We know, from the Jewish historian, that there were many slaves in Rome and Italy, who, at different times, had been removed from Palestine. These afterward received their liberty, and were living in great numbers at Rome, practising the customs and rites of their fathers. Eighteen years before the present time the Jews were banished from Rome by Tiberius, and many of them would have undoubtedly resorted to Jerusalem. These sons of liberated slaves very probably bore the title in the text, and, in connection with others from other cities of the Roman empire in the same condition, had their synagogue by themselves. Connected with the large synagogues were rabbinical schools or colleges for young students, under the charge of some celebrated rabbi. These pupils would be likely to covet an opportunity to display their theological acumen, and be eager to enter into dispute. *Cyrenians*] These were Jews from Cyrene, a large and powerful city in Africa. *Alexandrians*] Jews from Alexandria, in Egypt, in which city were multitudes of this people. *Cilicia*] A province of Asia Minor, bordering on the Mediterranean, where was Tarsus, the birthplace of Paul, who probably was a member of this synagogue. *Asia*] Asia Minor, the western peninsula, or the still smaller division of proconsular Asia. (See Acts ii, 9.)

10. *And they were not able to resist the wisdom, &c.]* By *wisdom* is meant something more than ordinary ingenuity in argument. It was that wisdom that cometh from above, rendering his naturally strong powers invincible. *And the Spirit]* He was endued with the Holy Ghost; what could resist or parry the influence of this? Our Lord had promised to give his apostles "a mouth and wisdom, which all their enemies should not be able to gainsay or resist." Luke xxi, 15. The Holy Ghost makes a powerful preacher.

11. *Then they suborned men]* Privily introduced or procured false wit-

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council,

13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

nesses. Induced to swear falsely. Being overcome in the discussion of their own seeking, and unable to meet the force of Stephen's demonstrations, they sought, by most cowardly and dishonest means, to destroy his influence and ruin him. *Blasphemous words against Moses, and against God]* This was the highest accusation that could be brought against any man, as blasphemy was also considered treason, and was punished with death. Lev. xxvi, 16. Blasphemy against man is falsely accusing, disparaging him, or treating disrespectfully his character and reputation;—against God, speaking falsely and impiously against him. By false inferences from the language of the apostles, in reference to Christ's fulfilling the ceremonial law, and rendering it unnecessary to salvation, but requiring faith in Jesus, who was greater than Moses, and was to be regarded henceforth as their teacher and spiritual leader, as if they had represented him as a false teacher or impostor, they accuse him of blasphemy against Moses; and, as his institutions were of divine appointment, they esteem this blasphemy against God also. Bishop Horsley, in his answer to Priestley, shows that this blasphemy against God consisted in asserting the divinity of Christ, which Stephen died attesting. (See verse 14.)

12. *And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes]* And they—that is, the Libertines—raised a commotion and popular tumult among the people and higher classes—the elders and scribes—who, being connected with the Sanhedrim, would summon Stephen to trial. *And they came upon him]* “And they, having come upon him” in a tumultuous manner, forcibly seized him without any legal arrest, and carried him in this way to the court of the Sanhedrim.

13. *And set up false witnesses]* They did not probably apply to him *language* that he did not use, but they perverted the sense of it, not quoting it correctly, and exaggerating what they did quote. They distorted the sense of it, and made it quite a different matter. We should always be watchful when we repeat another's, and especially an opponent's, language, to do it with absolute correctness, and not twist and distort it, to enable us to draw from it an unworthy and unintended inference. This was the falsehood of these suborned witnesses. *Against this holy place]* Against Jerusalem (Matt. iv, 5) and the temple, by prophesying their destruction. *And the law]* The law of Moses, in preaching salvation by Christ.

14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

15 And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

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14. *Shall destroy this place]* This our Lord himself had prophesied, and very probably Stephen had reiterated, though with a widely different meaning and intention from what they pretended. *Change the customs]* The rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion. The term *change* is used in the sense of abrogating, annulling, and introducing others.

15. *Looking steadfastly on him]* Fastening their eyes upon his countenance, attracted by his peculiar aspect and uncommon grace of appearance. *Saw his face as it had been the face of an angel]* Some commentators, among whom is found the pious and learned Doddridge, esteem this a miraculous and visible light, or glory, made to play over the face of Stephen, like that which glowed upon the face of Moses, (Exod. xxxiv, 29,) and sent by God as a divine attestation of his innocence of the charge of blasphemy, and of the regard in which he was held by the Almighty; but the largest number of writers upon Acts consider the expression proverbial, and used among the Hebrews to indicate majesty of bearing, grace of appearance, inspiring awe and reverence. Thus Esther speaks to Artaxerxes: "I saw thee as an angel of God, and my heart was troubled from fear of thy glory." Apocrypha, Esth. xv, 13. The innocence, dignity of character, and sense of divine approval, shone out conspicuously in his face, and was noted by all. There was a noticeable coincidence in this—Stephen was now accused of blasphemy against Moses and against God. When that prophet had been the most honored by the Almighty, he came down from the mount with his face radiant with heavenly light. So now was clearly signified to Stephen's accusers his innocence of such a charge, in his present resemblance to the great prophet when enjoying the manifest approval of God.

## CHAPTER VII.

1. Stephen makes his defense before the council, giving a running outline of the history of the Jews. 37. He shows that Moses himself prophesied of Christ. 44. And relates the continued rebellion and perversity of the Jews. 51. For this he rebukes them, and charges upon them the murder of the Just One, whom the prophets had foretold. 54. Enraged at this, beyond measure, they stoned him to death, while he engages in prayer to God for their forgiveness.

THEN said the high priest, Are these things so?

2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The

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1. *Then said the high priest]* Who was, by his office, the president of the council. *Are these things so?]* Art thou guilty of the charges made against thee by these witnesses?

2. *And he said]* It is sometimes inquired how Luke could know what Stephen said on this occasion? and the question admits of an easy answer. As the first martyr, and noted for his piety and wisdom, whatever was connected with his examination and death would be likely to be treasured up by the early disciples, and, very probably, records of his defense were immediately written, from which Luke derived his materials. Or, as Luke was the constant companion of St. Paul, and wrote under his direction and supervision, and as St. Paul was present at this defense and the subsequent stoning of Stephen, Luke might have confirmed the statements he had received from others, and from written records, by the recollections of this apostle. Concerning this discourse of Stephen much has been written, and various views held as to its scope and object. The intention of Stephen is not as clearly seen, and the application he would make of these historical details, as he was interrupted before he finished his address. Verse 54. A little attention to the circumstances and the character of the audience, however, will show the wisdom of Stephen in the choice of style of address and course of argument. He had been charged with blaspheming, and speaking lightly of the law. By his running sketch of their history, he showed his full belief in the facts recorded in their inspired books, his reverence for the patriarchs whom they esteemed, and for the law of Moses. Nothing could have been better calculated to hold the attention of a Jewish audience than a review of their national history. This was a Jewish peculiarity; and the discourse of Stephen is, in every sense, after the Hebrew model of popular addresses. (See Psa. lxxviii, cv, cvi, cxxxv; Ezek. xx.) By this course, at first conforming to their custom, gratifying them with a recital of the prominent events of their history, he succeeded in holding their attention, and preparing the way for his application, until the force of his powerful accusations roused them to

God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.

4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran. And from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell.

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madness. He shows them, in this review, that God could be worshiped in truth without the temple and Mosaic rites, by referring to the patriarchs, who worshiped God, and were approved, long before the days of Moses. Again, he skillfully retorts their accusation of breaking the law, and speaking against the holy place, upon themselves, showing that they, as a nation, had been continually guilty of neglecting and breaking the teachings of Moses—had frequently rejected the messengers that God had sent; that they, by their wickedness and perversity, had been the cause of the destruction of the *first* temple, as by the same conduct they might be also of the *second*. *Men, brethren, and fathers]* Titles of respect, applied to the members of the council. The word *men* and *brethren* should be translated together, the word *men* being pleonastic, and is addressed to the multitude who were gathered in;—as if he had said *fathers*, addressing the elders of the council, and *brethren*, turning to the crowd that followed them to the hall of judgment. *The God of glory]* *The glorious God*—a title of high respect, expressing his magnificence and majesty; showing that, so far from blaspheming him, Stephen regarded him with the utmost deference and awe. *Our father Abraham]* From whom the Jews were descended, and of whom they were proud to call themselves sons. Matt. iii, 9. This respect to the memory of Abraham would serve to conciliate his hearers. *When he was in Mesopotamia]* This country, the name of which is composed of two Greek words signifying *between the rivers*, lies between the river Euphrates and the Tigris. Here the ancestors of Abraham lived. Gen. xxiv, 4. *Before he dwelt in Charran]* Charran, which is the same as Haran of the Old Testament, was situated in the northern part of Mesopotamia, whither Abraham and his family removed from Ur.

3. *Get thee out of thy country]* Remove thyself from thy native land. The divine command quoted here is found in Gen. xii, 1.

4. *Came out of the land of the Chaldeans]* Formerly Ur, in the province of Chaldea or Babylonia, comprising the southern portion of the territory contained between the Tigris and Euphrates, while Mesopotamia embraced the more northern region. Sometimes the term *Chaldea* is applied to the whole country. *When his father was dead,*

5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child.

6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years.

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*he removed him, &c.]* Abraham left Ur under the divine direction, not knowing whither God would lead him, but giving himself up implicitly to his guidance. On his way, he abode in Haran until his father Terah died, and then journeyed to Canaan. Gen. xi, 32; xii, 1-5.

5. *And he gave him none inheritance in it]* God gave him none for immediate possession. All that he had he purchased of those residing there, as if he had no claim upon it. Gen. xxiii. *Not so much as to set his foot on]* Or, as we should say, "not a foot of land." *Yet he promised, &c.]* (See Gen. xii, 7; xiii, 15.) God promised it to Abraham in his seed. He gave it to him for his descendants, and confirmed the promise to his seed on his account. *When as yet he had no child]* The promise was made before a child was born to him, and when there was no human probability that there would be; but with God nothing is impossible. Gen. xv, 2, 3; xviii, 11, 12. And Abraham's faith triumphed over this obstacle. Rom. iv, 18.

6. *And God spake on this wise]* Spake in this manner—to this amount. *That his seed should sojourn in a strange land]* This passage in the Old Testament, here referred to by Stephen, is found in Gen. xv, 13, 14. The nation referred to was the Egyptian. *They should bring them into bondage]* Enslave them. This they did. The Hebrews being for many years free, they were finally, after the memory of Joseph had ceased, thrown into bitter servitude. *Entreat them evil]* Treat, or afflict them with cruelty. *Four hundred years]* (See Exod. xii, 41.) Moses makes the period four hundred and thirty years, and Paul also gives the same number. Gal. iii, 17. Stephen probably intended but to give the round numbers, as Josephus, who makes the period four hundred and thirty years, in speaking of it sometimes calls it four hundred. But the chief difficulty lies in the fact, that the truth of chronology does not permit that the Israelites should have remained in Egypt but about two hundred and forty-three years. This is satisfactorily reconciled by applying the time of the period, four hundred and thirty years, to the whole oppression of the promised family and seed until they went out of Egypt, or the whole time of the sojourning of Abraham and his posterity in Canaan and Egypt.

7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, saith God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.

8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,

10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt, and all his house.

11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction; and our fathers found no sustenance.

12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

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7. *Will I judge*] Will I "punish," being frequently used in this sense. *In this place*] That God promised to Abraham.

8. *And he gave him the covenant of circumcision*] The covenant that the Lord made with Abraham and his seed was attested by this rite of circumcision, which God established to confirm it and keep it in their memory. Gen. xvii, 4-10. *And so*] "In virtue of this covenant." They, by circumcising their children, signify their confidence in the covenant of God. *The twelve patriarchs*] The twelve sons of Jacob, so called because they were the heads or primogenitors of the tribes or families.

9. *Moved with envy*] A mingling of discontent and hatred at another's prosperity; a mean and criminal emotion. On account of the partiality of his father, and of his dreams indicating his future supremacy, his brothers envy Joseph. Gen. xxxvii. *God was with him*] Supporting him; giving him honor and raising him to power. God will never leave or forsake the righteous, however they may be neglected by their nearest friends.

10. *Favor and wisdom*] He obtained the respect and approbation of Pharaoh. By *wisdom* is meant the uncommon judgment and prophetic skill with which God endowed him. (See Gen. xli-xlv.) *All his house*] The principal officer in the palace had charge of the interests of the royal family and of the empire.

11. *Dearth*] Famine. *Great affliction*] Arising from the famine. *Our fathers*] The family of Jacob. *Sustenance*] Food.

12. *Corn in Egypt*] Corn is the general term applied to all grain in the East. *Wheat* is denoted here. *Our fathers*] He sent ten of them, Joseph being in Egypt and Benjamin at home. Stephen only refers to the outlines of the history, without entering into all the particulars.

13 And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren: and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.

14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.

15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor, *the father of Sychem.*

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13. *Was made known]* “Made himself known.”

14. *Threescore and fifteen souls]* That is, seventy-five persons. In Gen. xlvi, 27, it is said all the souls of the house of Jacob which came into Egypt were threescore and ten, or seventy. To make this number, the family of Joseph, his wife and two sons, are included. To reconcile these two enumerations, the five sons of Manasseh and Ephraim, born in Egypt, omitted by Moses because they were born after Jacob's removal, are included. This was the usual reckoning of the Jews. Thus the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, which Stephen quoted, renders Gen. xlvi, 27: “But the sons of Joseph, who were with him in Egypt, were *nine* souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came with Jacob into Egypt, were *seventy-five* souls.”

16. *And was carried over into Sychem]* That is, the sons of Jacob were buried in Sychem; for it is said in Gen. l, 13, that Jacob was buried in the cave of the field of Machpelah, that Abraham had bought. It is also stated in Gen. l, 25, 26, Josh. xxiv, 32, and Exod. xiii, 19, that the bones of Joseph were brought over from Egypt by the Israelites when they went out of captivity, and were buried in Sychem. Nothing is said of the remains of the other patriarchs in the Old Testament, but Stephen mentions the prevailing and probable tradition that they were also buried in the same place; the tradition stating that they were carried to Canaan and buried by their children after their death, while the bones of Joseph, according to his commandment, were retained and carried up with them when they left Egypt. Shechem was situated in a valley between Mount Ebal and Gerizim, in what was afterward the province of Samaria, where Jacob abode when he came up from Mesopotamia with his family. Here he bought a lot of land, which remained in the possession of his family. In the days of Christ the place was called Sychar, John iv, 5; now it is called Naplous. *In the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor, the father of Sychem]* Considerable perplexity has arisen among commentators in reference to the apparent discrepancy contained in this verse. Emmor is the same as

17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,

18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

19 The same dealt subtly with our kindred, and evil-entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months :

Hamor of the Old Testament, of whom Jacob, and not Abraham, bought a portion of land. Gen. xxxiii, 18, 19. The land that Abraham bought was in or near Hebron, and this was purchased from the sons of Heth. Gen. xxiii, 17-20. The apparent discrepancy is, however, accounted for by the supposition that the word Abraham is an interpolation, not in the original text, but the work of some transcriber. Many of the old MSS. are without it, while some have "our father" in its place, which evidently refers to Jacob; others have no nominative in the verse, which is probably the true version, the verb bought agreeing with Jacob understood, he being the subject of these remarks, and his name being mentioned in the preceding verse. Some ignorant transcriber, noticing that the verb bought had no nominative immediately connected with it, and confounding the two accounts of land purchases—that of Abraham's, as well as Jacob's—inserted, most incorrectly, the name of the former patriarch.

17. *The time of the promise drew nigh]* That is, the time of its fulfillment, referring, perhaps, to the promises relating to their return to the land of promise, or of their great increase of numbers. Genesis xii, 7; xv, 14, 16; xxii, 16, 17. *The people grew]* Increased greatly in numbers. Exod. i, 7-9.

18. *Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph]* A king of a different race or family. It is generally supposed that there was a change in the reigning family at this time, and another dynasty obtained the ascendancy. *Knew not]* Manifested no respect for, was inimical to, Joseph.

19. *Dealt subtly]* Craftily, with treachery. *Evil-entreated]* Cruelly treated—afflicted. *So that they cast out]* Or, to cause them to cast their children out. This was the crafty purpose of the Egyptians, not only commanding them to destroy the male infants, but so grievously oppressing them, that to avoid their children's suffering the horrors *they experienced*, they should be driven to practice infanticide, and thus keep down a population that the Egyptian tyrant feared. *That they might not live]* "To experience the miserable fate of their parents."

20. *In which time]* During this oppression. *Moses was born]* (See

21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

the account in Exodus ii.) *Exceeding fair*] Original, “Fair to God”—a Hebraism to express a high state of excellence of any description; he was peculiarly fair.

21. *And when he was cast out*] Exposed to death. His parents not being able to obey the tyrannical law, commanding his death, and yet not daring to retain him, launch him out in his little boat of rushes, hoping some good providence may secure his rescue. *Pharaoh's daughter*] The kings of Egypt all bore the title Pharaoh, as the Roman emperors were called Cæsar, and as the Russian are called Czar. *For her own son*] Adopted, and educated him as her own.

22. *And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*] Egypt, now a debased and ignorant country, was once esteemed the mother of the arts and sciences. This country was one of the earliest settled, and soonest reached a high degree of civilization. The learning of the age, of course, was limited; but Egypt stood first on the list of nations for her acquaintance with what was known. Philosophy, astrology, geometry, medicine, and kindred sciences, were here at least imperfectly understood and taught. Allusion is made to the learning of the Egyptians in other scriptures, as 1 Kings iv, 30; Isa. xix, 11, 12. In these branches Moses was well instructed. *Mighty in words*] This may at first seem inconsistent with the statement in Exod. iv, 10, of an impediment in his speech, and a want of eloquence. The description here refers rather to the matter than to the manner. He was powerful in his doctrine, in his thoughts and writings, as delivered by Aaron, or inscribed by his own pen. Mighty in persuasion and for conviction, though not eloquent in address. *In deeds*] Referring to his miracles. Exod. vii. According to Josephus, he was famed as a general in the army of Egypt for his bravery and his victories; but this account depends upon uncertain traditions.

23. *Forty years old*] This was the Jewish tradition, not stated in the Scriptures. *It came into his heart*] A strong sympathy was awakened in his mind in their behalf by witnessing their sufferings, or the Spirit of God excited a strong inclination of his nature there. Exod. ii, 11, 12. *To visit his brethren*] To confer with them concerning some measures for their relief

24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:

25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

26 And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

27 But he that did his neighbor wrong, thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?

28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?

29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons.

24. *Suffer wrong]* Cruelly, and, without reason, abused. *Smote the Egyptian]* Slew him. (See the account in Exod. ii.)

25. *For he supposed]* As the promised period of their deliverance, handed down by tradition, had arrived, and he, moved by the Spirit of God to this resistance of oppression, had boldly taken the first step, he might have naturally supposed they would have risen at once, concluding that God had appointed him to be their deliverer, or he would not have ventured upon such a course. *But they understood not]* Their minds had become so darkened and broken by long oppression, that hope had given place to despair, and courage to indifference.

26. *He showed himself]* Appeared suddenly among them, perhaps to discover the effect of yesterday's transactions. *As they strove]* Quarreled. *And would have set them at one again]* Reconciled them to each other, and thus made them one in feeling.

27. *Who made thee, &c.]* A proverbial expression, as if he had said, "What right have you to interfere? This is our business; we settle our quarrel without appealing to you as an umpire." They are the words of a brutal, passionate man, to the peacemaker who dares to interfere with him in the height of his temper.

29. *Then fled Moses at this saying]* Because he was by this assured that his own brethren were treacherous to him, and had circulated the account of his smiting the Egyptian. He feared lest, coming to the ears of Pharaoh, it would excite his anger; on this account he fled from Egypt. *Was a stranger]* A wanderer. *The land of Midian]* Called, in the Old Testament, Midian: a tract of land situated between the northern gulfs of the Red Sea, extending further west into the desert toward Mount Seir. *Where he begat two sons]* Gershom and Eliezer. (See Exod. xviii, 3, 4.) The marriage of Moses is recorded in Exod. ii, 16-21.

30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sina, an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

31 When Moses saw *it*, he wondered at the sight; and as he drew near to behold *it*, the voice of the Lord came unto him,

32 *Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

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30. *When forty years were expired]* According to the tradition, and he was thus eighty years old. *In the wilderness of Mount Sina]* In another place (Exod. iii, 1) Moses calls the mountains Horeb. They are two peaks of the same mountain, and both terms were perfectly proper. This sublime scene occurred in the wilderness, around the base of these isolated heights. *An angel of the Lord]* The term *angel* signifies *messenger*. In Heb. i, 4, they are represented as ministering servants of God, attending upon his commands, and ministering under his direction upon the heirs of salvation; they are intelligent spirits, created before man, and of a higher order of intelligence. (See Longking's Notes, vol. i, p. 42.) It is the general opinion of evangelical commentators that the angel spoken of here was the *angel of the covenant*, the *angel Jehovah*, often mentioned in the Old Testament, and believed to have been the Son of God. Thus in Exod. iii, 4, where this event is described, after it is stated, verse 2, "the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire," it is said: "*GOD called unto him out of the midst of the bush.*" *In a flame of fire in a bush]* "In a flame of a bush of fire." The bush appeared to be all in a flame; in that fire that seemed to be consuming, and yet not injuring the bush, the angel of the Lord appeared.

31. *He wondered]* He was awe-struck, astonished.

32. *Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold]* He trembled because it was the voice of the Almighty, and dared not gaze, lest he should behold his awful presence.

33. *Put off thy shoes]* A mark of reverence and respect. "To preserve cleanliness in the performances of any of the offices of religion, it was, from the earliest ages, directed that the worshiper should take off his sandals before he entered a temple. And the custom still continues in the East, where it originated."—BLOOMFIELD. *Is holy ground]* Rendered so by the presence of Jehovah. It is on this account that the house of worship is eminently holy; God's name has been inscribed here, and it has been consecrated to his service: "*Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever.*" Psa. xciii, 5.

34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

35 This Moses, whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

36 He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

A solemn reverence should check all improper levity and carelessness of conduct as we enter such a place. The language of every heart should be,—

“Lo! God is here! let us adore,  
And own how dreadful is this place.”

34. *I have seen, I have seen*] The sentence is repeated to express intensity, and is in accordance with the practice of Hebrew writers when they would give particular prominence or importance to any matter. The words signify *I know*; that I have not believed has not been because I have not seen. I plainly know, and pity the afflictions of my people. *Am come down*] According to human conceptions. God is everywhere at once; but where he is immediately performing some work of providence or judgment, he is spoken of in the Scriptures, in accordance with our ideas of personal acts, as being peculiarly there; *coming from heaven*, our idea of God being elevated, as if he were sitting upon some exalted place in the universe.

35. *This Moses*] Mr. Ripley remarks upon this portion of Stephen's discourse:—He “now proceeds to remind his hearers of the manner in which their forefathers had treated Moses, though he was so evidently commissioned by God to be their deliverer and leader. The design of Stephen appears to have been to show his hearers their resemblance to a former generation of their people, and to excite fears of the just displeasure of Heaven on them, as it had fallen on their forefathers.” *Ruler and a deliverer*] A governor or leader, and one who rescues from danger; thus God made Moses a leader and deliverer of the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. *By the hand of the angel*] Under the guidance, and with the strength and succor afforded by the angel of the Lord.

36. *Wonders and signs in the land of Egypt*] Extraordinary miracles, confirming tokens of his power and presence. Exod. vii. *In the Red Sea*] This sea lies between Egypt and the Desert of Arabia, in which they wandered. It was in this sea that Pharaoh and his hosts were

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.

38 This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

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drowned, while the Hebrews, begirt with a miraculous defense, passed over dry shod and unharmed. (See Exod. xiv, 21-31.) *And in the wilderness forty years]* During all this time they were wandering to and fro in the desert, fed by miraculously provided food, drinking streams issuing from the living rock, and witnessing the most extraordinary events in the vicinity of Mount Sinai. Exod. xvi, xvii, &c.

37. *This is that Moses]* This same great prophet whose mission God had so wonderfully confirmed and honored by signs and wonders, clearly foretold that, in a distant day, the Lord should raise up for them another prophet, in many respects similar to himself, whom they shoult obey. Stephen thus leaves them to infer that Christ, whom they had put to death, was the prophet Moses referred to, showing there was no opposition between them, and thus opening up before them the peril they must run in thus rejecting a divinely appointed Redeemer. The prophecy is found in Deut. xviii, 18. (See note on Acts iii, 22.)

38. *This is he that was in the church]* That is, Moses is the person who was in the church, &c. *In the church]* In the assembly or congregation of Israel, as the word is thus translated in Acts xix, 32. *With the angel which spake to him]* The angel of the covenant, the angel Jehovah, the adorable Son of God, who was there in the church of Israel, as well as in the present church, guiding and blessing them. In Exod. xix, xx, where we have the account of Moses going up into the mount, and receiving, and afterward proclaiming, the ten commandments, we perceive no reference to angelic administration. It is said: "And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain," &c. Exod. xix, 3. It is evident, therefore, that Stephen intended the angel Jehovah, who is the Son of God, and "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Phil. ii, 6. Moses was mediator between him and the assembly of their fathers. *Lively oracles]* The commandments and divine instructions "given to Moses were *efficacious or salutary oracles.*" "Every period beginning with, 'And the Lord said unto Moses,' is properly an oracle. But the oracles intended here are chiefly the ten commandments. These are termed 'living,' because all 'the word of God,' applied by his Spirit, 'is

39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

living and powerful,' (Heb. iv, 12,) enlightening the eyes, rejoicing the heart, converting the soul, raising the dead."—WESLEY.

39. *To whom our fathers would not obey]* Stephen thus exhibits the perversity and stubbornness of their nation. Although Moses had thus carried them through the Red Sea, and worked, by the power of God, signs and wonders before them, and was even in communication with the angel Jehovah, and received and delivered the very words of Jehovah to them, still their fathers would not obey, but rejected his authority, prepared an idol to worship as their God, and set about returning to Egypt. A solemn warning, this, in reference to their rejection of Christ! *Thrust him from them]* Rejected, disobeyed him, turned away from his instructions. Exod. xvii, 3; Num. xiv, 4; xxi, 5. *And in their hearts turned back]* Longed to return. They were determined to return; their minds dwelt on the subject, while their perverted and idolatrous affections reverted back to the sensual pleasures of Egypt. How many, while they profess godliness, have *in their hearts* turned back again to the world!

40. *Saying unto Aaron]* (See Exod. xxxii, 1.) *Make us gods]* That is, images of God, idols—objects of worship, such as the heathen Egyptians used. It was customary among Eastern nations to carry the images of their gods before them on journeys and military expeditions, fancying that they would thus be protected by them. Our God *is everywhere!* *We wot not]* We know not. Moses was then on Sinai receiving commands from the Lord; and as his return was delayed, they gave up the expectation of seeing him again, overlooked all the divine miracles, and returned to their idolatries.

41. *And they made a calf in those days]* (See Exod. xxxii, 4–6.) This was an image of one of the Egyptian deities, with which they were acquainted. They probably intended to worship the true God, although against the express commands of Jehovah, under this form. A bull (*apis*) was worshiped by the Egyptians as a symbol of Osiris, a former monarch of Egypt, and the introduction of agriculture among them; an ox, as significant of labor, being chosen as a proper symbol. The calf was selected with great care by the priests, by certain marks which it bore, or which they artfully fixed upon it. This animal was placed in the temple of Osiris, carefully attended

42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?

43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of

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and fed, and devoutly worshiped by all this blinded people. When the ox died, or was drowned by the priests, great lamentations were made, and great rejoicings declared the appearance of Osiris again in the form of another. This god, of all the bestial and reptile gods of the Egyptians, the Hebrews chose, as farmers would have been likely to, when they fell into idolatry. *Offered sacrifice]* "Celebrated sacrificial feastings to the honor of their god."

42. *Then God turned]* Averted his approving face; turned away with disapprobation of their conduct. *Gave them up]* Suffered, permitted them. *To worship the host of heaven]* The heavenly bodies; deifying and worshiping the sun, moon, and the stars. *As it is written in the book of the prophets]* By this is meant the twelve minor (or shorter) prophets, from Hosea to Malachi, which, in the ancient Jewish division of the Scriptures, formed but one book. (See Amos v, 25-27.) *Have ye offered to me slain beasts, &c.]* When a question is thus asked, it usually has the force of a denial; as if the Lord had said, "Ye did not offer to me," &c. But it is evident that they did offer sacrifice to the Lord in that period. The probable meaning of the passage is, that they had indeed externally attended to the worship of God in the forms of the tabernacle service, but in their *hearts* they had been idolatrous; they had not *alone* offered sacrifices to Jehovah, but builded a temple to Moloch, and worshiped him also: so little sincerity and true piety had there been in their offerings that they were all accounted as nothing.

43. *Ye took up]* Carried about with you, as the tabernacle of the Lord was moved to and fro, from one encampment to another, for idolatrous purposes. *The tabernacle of Moloch]* The term Moloch signifies sovereign lord, or king. By some it is supposed that the planet Saturn is worshiped under this title; others, with more probability, the sun, (the *king of heaven*.)

Moloch was a horrid idol in appearance; and, in his religious rites, children were often offered to him in sacrifice. Lev. xviii, 21; xx, 2, 5. This horrible practice may have arisen from the story in heathen mythology, that *Saturn*, the eldest of the gods, ate his own children, and it was thought no more acceptable offering could be made to him than the innocent infants. O how abominable and bloody are the rites of heathenism and the requirements of idolatry!

your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness,

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His image was usually of immense size, and hollow, constructed of brass, and gilt; it had the face of a calf or bull, with the hands outstretched, into which the children were placed, while the image was heated within, and they were thus consumed in unspeakable torments. The Israelites probably had an image of a smaller size, admitting of their bearing it about, and concealing it from the eyes of Moses, and the tabernacle might have been a tent constructed something like the real *tabernacle*, a kind of case or covering in which they placed the image, and bore it about. *And the star of your god Remphan*] In the original passage in Amos, from which this is quoted, the name of the idol god in the Hebrew text is *Chiun*, but the Jewish translators of the Septuagint have substituted the word Remphan: some perplexity has arisen from this; but the probable view of the matter is, that both the terms apply to the same idol-deity; Moloch being worshiped for the sun, and Remphan or Chiun for some planet or star, as Saturn. A star was the idol of this god, and the passage might read, And the image of that god whom ye worship under the symbol of a star. *Figures which ye made*] Images, representations. They did not profess to worship the images, but the idol divinities represented by them. Thus the Papists make the same distinction; they pretend not to worship the little idols of the Virgin Mary, saints, &c., but to worship God in the use of them. But Jehovah has forbidden the use of all such representations and figures in divine worship. Exod. xx, 4, 5. *I will carry you away beyond Babylon*] In Amos, the word Damascus is used instead of Babylon. Some suppose the present reading erroneous, the word being an alteration by the transcriber, and being introduced from the margin, where the place of captivity had been noted down. They were, however, carried captive into Assyria, which was beyond Babylon, as well as Damascus, and Stephen might have mentioned the exact place of their captivity to mark the certain fulfillment of the prophecies of God. It would have been a very natural paraphrase upon the passage he was quoting, so many years after it had been fulfilled; and the captivity was always spoken of in connection with Babylon. The object of Stephen is to give a running history of events illustrating the character of the Jewish nation, and the dealings of God with them.

44. *Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness*] Referring to the costly and sacred tent prepared by the divine command, and according to

as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.

45 Which also our fathers, that came after, brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;

46 Who found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

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his direction, in which were the most holy articles used in the service of God, and where the most solemn rites of divine worship were performed. Exod. xxv, xxvi. It was called the *tabernacle of the congregation*; and Stephen gives it the name he does from its being the place where God gave evidence, or witness, of his glorious presence, or in reference to the *tables of testimony* contained within. Exod. xxv, 40; Heb. viii, 5. Stephen, having shown the ingratitude and impiety of the Jewish nation, as one part of the charge against him related to his speaking disrespectfully of the temple, proceeds to speak of the varied places where God had been properly worshiped, showing that the place, of itself, was a small matter, and that its removal or change was not disastrous. God had been worshiped first without temple or tabernacle, afterward he instituted the use of the latter; finally, the piety of David and Solomon offered to the Lord a more stable place of worship, which was accepted; but still He might again change the mode and place of his manifestation, if he pleased: God cannot be confined to any building of human construction, but fills the universe, and can only be properly worshiped by the spirit, and in spirit and in truth.

45. *Which also*] The tabernacle. *Our fathers, that came after*] The descendants of those that built the tabernacle. *Brought in with Jesus*] With Joshua, Jesus being the Greek name for the Hebrew title Joshua. *Into the possession of the Gentiles*] Of the heathen nations inhabiting the land of Canaan, which, having been promised to the seed of Abraham, they entered upon the possession, driving out the previous occupants, who, by their sins, had exposed themselves to this summary punishment on the part of God. *Unto the days of David*] That is, the tabernacle remained the divinely authorized place of worship until the time of David, when he set about constructing a new edifice. 1 Chron. xxii. He did not build, but began the preparations. Or it may refer to the driving out of the Gentiles, which was not accomplished until David's day.

46. *Who found favor*] Obtained the special approbation of God, and was greatly prospered. Having abundant means to build, he *desired to find a tabernacle*] "Asked for himself." Earnestly de-

47 But Solomon built him a house.

48 Howbeit, the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,

49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

51 Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

sired a permanent place or house for the ark of the covenant.  
2 Sam. vii.

47. *But Solomon built him a house]* David was not granted the privilege, because he was a man of war, 1 Chron. xxii, 8, 9; but his son Solomon obtained this honor.

48. *Howbeit, the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands]* Thus very appropriately illustrating his idea by a quotation from the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple. 1 Kings viii, 27. Stephen thus shows the vanity of relying upon the temple itself, however magnificent, or even honored by its age, or the glorious acts that had been performed in it; God is not confined to it; it is only sacred because he has honored it with his presence; but he never was limited to it, or confined to its boundaries, for his place of residence or worship. The whole universe is his temple, and every broken heart his altar. *As saith the prophet]* The prophet Isaiah, whom he proceeds to quote.

49. *Heaven is my throne]* (See Isa. lxvi, 1, 2.) Expressive of the majesty and limitlessness of Deity. The highest heavens are but his throne, and the whole earth, as vast as it may appear to us, is but, as it were, his footstool; much less can it be expected that a house made with hands can contain Him. *What is the place of my rest?]* Where is my fixed residence? or do I need rest, that a place should be prepared?

51. Stephen seems, with the preceding verse, to have broken off suddenly the train of his argument, without drawing his inferences, or attempting to apply the subject to his hearers. In this verse he commences an entirely different strain, proceeding immediately, in a very solemn and faithful manner, to charge them with their manifold sins as a nation, and to press upon them their own personal guilt. It is possible that while addressing them, as is described in the previous verses, he noticed the growing uneasiness of his hearers; and, perhaps, as they saw more plainly the object he had in view, in the facts he was stating, their indignation became excited, and they exhibited symptoms of proceeding to immediate violence. On this

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted ? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One ; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers ;

53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

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account Stephen leaves his subject ; and in the few moments that he has remaining, proceeds to give them this personal and fearful warning. *Ye stiff-necked]* Obstinate, perverse, self-willed. *Uncircumcised in heart and ears]* This was a very common Jewish expression. Circumcision was the seal of the divine covenant with them, and a type of the holiness and purity of the law of God, and their consecration to him. To say, then, that their hearts were uncircumcised, would be the same as to say that their hearts were impure, disobedient to the law of God, and obstinately set against his will. By their ears being uncircumcised, is meant their unwillingness even to *hear* the truth ; they were both impatient of rebuke and refused to obey. *Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost]* In refusing to hear and obey the words of the inspired teachers and prophets whom God had sent among them, they had resisted the Holy Spirit, by whom they were endowed and commissioned.

In notwithstanding now the appeals of the servants of God, it is not man we resist, but the Holy Spirit speaking through man, and reaching the heart.

52. *Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted ?]* The question put in this form is equivalent to an affirmative assertion that they had persecuted, &c. The meaning is, not that they had persecuted every particular prophet, but their general treatment of them had been of this character. Nearly every prophet of truth that God had sent among them, from Moses to Jesus Christ, had been evil-entreated and persecuted by them. Our Lord makes the same charge against them. Matt. xxiii, 37 ; Luke xiii, 33. *And they have slain them]* That is, the prophets. Isaiah was reported among the Jews to have been sawn asunder, by the order of the bloody Manasseh. *Just One]* The Messiah, a common appellation of him who was expected among the Jews. *Betrayers and murderers]* The Sanhedrim had betrayed him by placing him in the hands of the Roman officers as a culprit, under a false accusation, and thus became his murderers in declaring him worthy of death, and clamoring for his blood. Matt. xxvi, 66 ; xxvii, 20, 26.

53. *Who have received the law by the disposition of angels]* Different views are taken of this passage. Dr. Doddridge translates it, and

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their teeth*.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly

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paraphrases the whole verse in this manner:—" Which is the less to be wondered at, as you have already despised so many advantages, and given such amazing proof of the obstinacy of your hearts; *who have received the law*, which was delivered from Mount Sinai with such awful pomp, *through ranks of angels*, that were marshaled in solemn array on that grand occasion, (Deut. xxxiii, 2,) *and yet have been so hardened that ye have not kept it.*" Dr. Clarke holds to the same opinion, esteeming the word, here translated disposition, to mean *ranks*, hosts, an array. The Psalmist seems to allude to this in Psalm lxviii, 17. A simpler, and, perhaps, as correct a reading of the passage is: "Ye have received the law at *the appointment of angels*;" that is, angels being appointed as ministering instruments for its promulgation. Thus St. Paul says, in Gal. iii, 19, speaking of the institution of the law, that it was "ordained by *angels*," and referring to the same in Heb. ii, 2, styles it *the word spoken by angels*. This does not militate against what Stephen had said in the preceding verse, (38,) of *the angel* that spake with Moses. The *angel of the covenant* was present, surrounded by these heavenly hosts, who did his bidding, and by whose instrumentality the ceremonies of the law were established.

54. Stephen's speech here breaks off abruptly, without further inference or application. Inflamed by the severe, because truthful, charges of Stephen, the maddened multitudes rush upon him like wild beasts. *They were cut to the heart*] They were pierced through, with conviction, anger, and bitter revenge. *Gnashed with their teeth*] So brutal does passion make a man. Such was their rage, they gave all the outward symptoms of madness, foaming and gnashing their teeth.

55. *Full of the Holy Ghost*] (See notes on preceding chapters.) Grace is given as our necessities require; though Stephen was a man ordinarily richly endowed, and full of the Holy Ghost, yet his capacity is now increased, and a larger portion bestowed, preparing him for the painful, but glorious scene to follow.

How often the triumphant saint, in the dying hour, when the body is torn with pain, and nature is fast dissolving, is enabled, with confidence, to sing,—

" And while you hear my heart-strings break,  
How sweet the moments roll,  
A mortal paleness on my cheek,  
But glory in my soul!"

into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

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*Looked up steadfastly into heaven]* Seeing what was coming—turning his eye upward in devout prayer and heavenly meditation. *Saw the glory of God]* A glorious and luminous symbol, like the Shechinah, or pillar of fire, in which God manifested himself in the tabernacle, between the cherubim, over the mercy-seat—a glorious visual manifestation of this nature. Mr. Wesley thus remarks:—"Doubtless, he saw such a glorious representation, God miraculously operating on his imagination, as on Ezekiel's, when he 'sat in his house at Babylon,' and saw Jerusalem, and seemed to himself to be transported there. Ezek. viii, 1-4. And probably other martyrs, when called to suffer the last extremity, have had extraordinary assistance of some similar kind." *And Jesus standing on the right hand of God]* Expressive of his exalted station, of his office as Mediator, and of his interest in those who were thus suffering in behalf of his gospel. He was thus represented to suggest to the heart of the early martyr the present help and support he might expect from the divine power.

56. *I see the heavens opened]* Before his eye, it appeared as if the atmosphere above separated, and he looked far away into the upper glories. *The Son of man]* An appellation often used by our Saviour when speaking of himself, on account of his humanity. Luke xxiv, 69.

57. *Then they cried out with a loud voice]* The last saying of Stephen had been a virtual assertion of the Messiahship and divinity of Christ. Their rage rises to its highest pitch, and the people raise a confused and boisterous clamor to drown the voice of Stephen. The council, although they could not convict Stephen, seem to connive at the course of the mob. *And stopped their ears]* As if he were speaking blasphemy, and significant of their abhorrence and detestation of what he said, they closed up their ears, drawing the parts together. *And ran upon him with one accord]* In great tumult, all rushing in a mass upon him.

58. *Cast him out of the city]* As it was commanded in their law that they should treat a blasphemer. Lev. xxiv, 14. They hurried him, however, out of the city without a legal decision, not waiting for his condemnation. *And the witnesses]* That is, the false witnesses, who

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord,

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had borne testimony against him. Acts vi, 13. The law required that the witnesses should commence the execution of the penalty, in order that, as they would have to be the executioners, they should be hindered from bearing false witness. Deut. xvii, 7. *Laid down their clothes]* Their outer garment being a loose mantle, it would greatly impede them in lifting, and render it almost impossible for them to throw the stones. *At a young man's feet, whose name was Saul]* Afterward the apostle Paul. This is our first introduction, in the New Testament, to this great apostle, whose labors and sufferings for Christ's sake afterward became so abundant and successful in building up the church. This is mentioned to show what Paul was before his conversion, and the power of that grace that opened his eyes. He always speaks of this with the utmost grief and shame. Acts xxii, 20.

59. *Calling upon God, and saying]* The word God is not in the original, but has been inserted by translators, and undoubtedly is an erroneous translation, and ought not to be here. The verse would more correctly read, as Mr. Wesley has translated, (with which Dr. Clarke coincides,) "And they stoned Stephen invoking, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Thus this holy martyr, filled with the Spirit, addresses Jesus Christ in prayer, and reposes his soul in his divine keeping, in this way paying to him the highest and most solemn acts of devotion, due only to the one true and living God. This shows the propriety of offering divine worship to the Saviour, and clearly establishes his divinity, as one with the Father, into whose hands he committed his spirit when he hung dying upon the cross. Luke xxiii, 46. It was remarked of the early Christians by an enemy, Pliny, the Roman, that they were accustomed to meet and sing praises to Christ as God. *Receive my spirit]* "Receive my soul to the mansions of the blessed." To prepare such mansions our Lord had left them, and this was to be their comfort and support in all their afflictions and persecutions. John xiv, 2; Luke xvi, 22; xxiii, 43.

60. *And he kneeled down]* In devotion. He sought an humble, submissive posture, expressive of his resignation to the will of God, and in order to spend his remaining conscious moments in the astonishing work of *praying for his murderers.* *Lay not this sin to their charge]* Impute it not to them for sin; let them not suffer the awful consequences of their conduct; forgive them. How similar was this to

lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

the final prayer of the Saviour: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do!" Luke xxiii, 34. It is the genuine spirit of the gospel, which always breathes the purest and most disinterested benevolence. There was no malice, no anger, in the heart of the bleeding martyr; but it was filled with the sincerest pity for those who were doing themselves infinitely more injury than they were inflicting upon him. How blessed to be able to die thus! The religion of our Saviour, and that only, can enable its possessor to meet death in its most terrible form without trembling, having robbed death of his sting, the grave of its victory. *He fell asleep]* Expressing the composure with which he died, and embracing also the blessed idea of a resurrection. It was a repose—not a destruction of the body. This is a common expression in reference to the death of righteous men recorded in the Bible, and it is as beautiful as it is appropriate. Death to the Christian is not an enemy, but a friend; he embraces it as he does sleep—he sweetly prepares himself for a delightful repose from all the ills of life,—

"Where the wicked cease from troubling,  
And where the weary are at rest."

John xi, 11; 1 Cor. xv, 18, 51; 1 Thess. iv, 14.

## CHAPTER VIII.

1. Persecution of the church. 5. Preaching of Philip in Samaria. 14. Peter and John visit the converts, and bestow upon them the Holy Ghost. 18. The hypocrisy and venality of Simon exposed. 26. Philip instructs and baptizes the eunuch.

**A**ND Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was

1. *And Saul was consenting unto his death]* The original word has a stronger meaning than to consent, or to permit a thing to be done; it signifies rather to *approve, to be pleased* with this murderous treatment of Stephen. This clause of the verse properly belongs to the preceding chapter, and should never have been separated from it in the division of the chapters. *And at that time]* Commencing with the attack upon Stephen, a bloody persecution broke out against the early church. One victim only served to inflame their cruel appetite for others; and, stung by the truth of the terrible accusations of

at Jerusalem ; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into

Stephen, they commence an indiscriminate attack upon all the disciples of Christ, in the vain hope of putting a termination to the spread of the gospel. *And they were all scattered abroad*] The term *all* is used here in a limited sense, meaning *a very large number*; as a church still continued to exist in Jerusalem in spite of all the persecution, principally, perhaps, the poorer and more humble members, whose circumstances would not admit of their removal, or whose presence would not excite so much notice. The rest left the city, and made their residences in other parts of Judea, and in the province of Samaria, at the north of Judea. *Except the apostles*] In the midst of this bloody persecution, a divine Providence preserved alive the most marked objects of their vengeance—the apostles and leaders of the new religion. Like the preservation of the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar is their escape, while they remain preaching in the midst of their enemies. They stay behind, while the others flee, to comfort and build up the little church that remains in the city; to show the sincerity of their teaching, and their willingness even to confirm it with their blood, and to strengthen the faith of those who have fled, by their constancy, and by their wonderful preservation. It may not have been cowardice that drove the others from the city. Jesus had commanded them, when persecuted in one city, to flee to another; and it was in obedience to this divine command that they now escaped to other places.

2. *And devout men*] Religious men. This may refer either to some of the believers, or to certain pious Jews, who, though they had not openly acknowledged their sympathy with the persecuted church, were far from being unfriendly in their feelings; at any rate, were indignant at the outrage committed by an infuriated mob. Joseph of Arimathea, a pious Jew, of this description, buried our Saviour; and very possibly some such may have buried Stephen. *Carried Stephen*] The word translated *carried* rather imports that they made all the necessary preparations for his burial, washing, anointing, embalming, laying out the body, and carrying it to the grave. *Made great lamentation over him*] This was customary with the Jews at their funerals, and is, with most Oriental nations, at the present day. They pay peculiar respect to Stephen on account of his virtues and constancy.

3. *He made havoc of the church*] However some may have been

every house, and haling men and women, committing *them* to prison.

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.

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affected by the martyrdom of Stephen, he felt no remorse of conscience, but verily thought he was doing God's service, so blinded was he at this time by the prejudices of his education. The word translated *made havoc*, properly signifies, to *ravage and destroy* like a wild beast. Thus St. Paul says of himself, in Gal. i, 13, that he "persecuted the church, and *wasted it*." What an evidence is this offensive description of the early life of the great apostle of the Gentiles, of the sincerity and honesty of the apostles! Luke was the constant companion and bosom friend of St. Paul, and wrote under his direction and inspection, yet his character is not spared, but presented in its darkest traits. The facts are stated in all their simplicity, however they may affect the character of the apostle. *Entering into every house]* Searching from house to house the suspected residences of Christians. *And haling men and women]* Dragging them to the tribunals for a summary trial and condemnation, and then hurrying them to prison. Neither sex is spared: helpless age and infancy; the tender woman, as well as the strong man, are all made subjects of this persecution. Saul does not act in this upon his own responsibility solely, but is authorized by the chief priests, and given full powers to execute their decree. Acts xxvi, 10.

4. *Went everywhere preaching the word]* Went in various directions, not confining themselves to Jewish territory. We find they not only spread through Judea and Samaria, but they were soon found in Antioch, Cyprus, and Phenice. Acts xi, 19. In these places, they were further from the power of the chief priests; the Jews also, who resided in these parts, would be less likely to be influenced by their persecuting spirit, and among whom, as they did not yet fully understand the gracious purpose of God concerning the Gentiles, they might labor.

Wherever a Christian man is led, in the providence of God, if he desire to glorify his Master, he will find ample opportunities for labor; and he should esteem it his duty and privilege everywhere, by precept and example, to "preach the word." We cannot but notice in the events recorded in these verses, how wonderfully the great purposes of God are secured even by the very opposition which wicked men make to their progress. Until this time, the company of believers was almost entirely limited to the city of Jerusalem; their love for the Holy City, their lingering Jewish prejudices, the

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

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comfort of each other's society—all would have served to retain them there had it not been for this persecution. By destroying or scattering this little company, they hoped to crush the whole affair, and put an entire end to the preaching of this doctrine. But what was the result? The dispersed Christians went *everywhere preaching the word*. The gospel, no longer confined to Jerusalem and the Jews, spreads in every direction among both Jews and Gentiles.

5. *Philip*] Not the apostle; for the apostles remained in Jerusalem: but one of the seven deacons, whose election to office is recorded in Acts vi, 5. He is afterward called *Philip the evangelist*, (Acts xxi, 8,) and resided with his daughters in Cesarea, when St. Paul visited him. *The city of Samaria*] Samaria was the name of the tract of country lying between Judea and Galilee, and also was the name of its capital. It is probably the city, and not the country, that is referred to here as the scene of Philip's labors. The city of Samaria was founded by Omri, king of Israel, (1 Kings xvi, 24,) and became the seat of government, and the residence of the kings of the ten tribes of Israel, who separated from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, in the reign of Solomon's son. 1 Kings xii, 16, 19. Here was Ahab's ivory palace, and a temple of Baal. 1 Kings xxii, 39. It was here that the prophet Elisha lived when he cured the Syrian Naaman. 2 Kings v. When the kingdom of Israel was overthrown, and the tribes were carried into captivity, the city was dismantled, and sunk into insignificance, as the neighboring city of Sychar became the metropolis. When the city, however, afterward came into the hands of Herod the Great, he rebuilt and beautified it, calling its name Sebaste, in honor of the Roman emperor Augustus; Sebaste being the Greek expression for *venerable*, which has the signification of *august* the Latin cognomen of the emperor. The name of the town was still Sebaste, but undoubtedly it was known, and often called, by its old name. Dr. Clarke, and some other commentators, think the city of Sychem in the province of Samaria, and not the city of Samaria, is here intended. Sychem, or Sychar, was at this time the principal city of Samaria, and many of its inhabitants had been converted under the preaching of the Saviour. *Preached Christ unto them*] Proclaimed that the long-promised Messiah had come and established his spiritual kingdom. He preached repentance and the remission of sins in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and announced the offers of salvation through faith in his death. The Samaritans are first visited on account of their Jewish extraction.

6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

8 And there was great joy in that city.

9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

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6. *With one accord]* As if by general consent, in large multitudes, without opposition, respectfully attended upon Philip's preaching.

7. *Unclean spirits]* Possessed with evil spirits—demons. (See Longking's Notes, vol. i, pp. 324, 325.) *Crying with loud voice]* As it is recorded they did in the days of the Saviour, (Mark i, 23–26,) and thus making it evident that it was something besides disease; in addition to this, all diseases that were healed are also mentioned. *Many taken with palsies]* Having become paralyties; having lost the use of part or all of their muscles of motion.

8. *There was great joy in that city]* Arising from the remarkable cures of friends who had been thought incurable, from the glorious truths Philip proclaimed, and from the effects of the gospel upon their hearts, as they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. xiv, 17.

9. *A certain man, called Simon]* Very many opinions have been expressed in reference to this individual by different commentators. Many doubtful traditions concerning him have been collected from the writings of the early Christian fathers. He has generally been supposed to have been the same Simon of whom Josephus speaks in his Antiquities—a Jew, and a native of Cyprus. All that we certainly know of him is, that he practiced magical arts, and, by his skill in working delusions, had produced upon the people an impression that he was a superior personage, even a divine Being. Tradition relates that he gave himself out to be the Almighty who gave the law to Moses, appearing also as the Son to the Jews, and as the Comforter to all other nations. He was probably a man of superior education, acquainted with philosophy and the sciences, familiar with, and an adept in, the arts of jugglery then known, and by these means had obtained a great influence over the ignorant and unobserving multitude. He, of course, did not receive Christ, but set himself up as a rival. *Used sorcery]* Used magical arts. The *magi* were, at first, men learned in philosophy, astrology, &c.; afterward these sciences, being turned into means of imposition, by false pretenders to knowledge—as, for instance, the declaring the future by

10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

12 But when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was bap-

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the position of the stars, or by lot, or entrails of animals, &c., &c., the term came to signify the same as necromancers, soothsayers, jugglers, who, by producing ocular illusions, by strange incantations and astonishing feats of agility, affected the multitude with a sense of awe and reverence in their presence, and secured their faith in their incantations. *Bewitched the people of Samaria]* Amazed, astonished, filled them with wonder—their reason and judgment being taken captive by his strange devices and unaccountable legerdemain. *Giving out that himself was some great one]* Assuming to be something superhuman, boldly publishing his high pretensions, and confirming them by his tricks.

10. *This man is the great power of God]* Some extraordinary person; one closely connected with Deity, and through whom astonishing divine manifestations were made.

11. *They had regard]* Listened to him, and believed in his pretensions.

12. *When they believed]* Receiving Jesus as their Saviour, and trusting in him. *The things concerning the kingdom of God]* Clearly opening the plan of salvation, and explaining the character of the kingdom of grace in the soul, through faith in Jesus Christ. *And the name of Jesus Christ]* That is, concerning the power of that name when used by believers to accomplish real miracles, and to perform substantial cures—a power infinitely superior to the tricks and pretences of an impostor. Thus says Peter, in Acts iii, 16, “His name, through faith in his name, has made this man strong.”

13. *Then Simon himself believed also]* That is, he *professed* to be a sincere believer. He was undoubtedly convinced of the reality of the miracles of Philip, wrought in the name of Jesus, and could not but have been convinced of the Messiahship of Christ, or, at least, that he was infinitely superior to him in power. But his heart remained unchanged. He was the shrewd, artful, money-loving deceiver. Seeing that the popular tide was turning from himself toward Philip, he seeks to attach himself to the evangelist, that he might still retain the favor, and enjoy the opportunity of fleecing the multitude. As he *professed* faith in Jesus, and it is not the province of man to judge

tized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

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the heart, he was admitted to the ordinance of baptism. *He continued with Philip]* Attended upon his instructions as a disciple, cultivated a familiar acquaintance with him, and noticed attentively his miracles. *Wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done]* It was now his turn to be amazed: he had bewitched, or astonished the multitude by tricks and deceptions; here were real performances of the most extraordinary character. Simon knew his were false; but he could discover no subterfuge here. Having no correct idea of the doctrine of Philip, or the source of his power, he may have hoped, by continuing with him, to have discovered his secret, and obtained the power to perform his supernatural works.

14. *Now when the apostles, &c.]* (See verse 1.) *Sent unto them Peter and John]* This shows that Peter's office was not superior to that of his brethren. He goes, as he is directed in the council of the apostles, sharing his labors and honors equally with John. The apostles are sent to assist Philip in his labors, to give proper direction in the establishment of the new church, and to confer the blessing of the Holy Ghost upon the believers.

15. *Prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost]* It was not the work of the Holy Spirit in the conviction and sanctification of the soul that the apostles now prayed for, for this had already been bestowed in connection with the labors of Philip, but the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, conveying the power of speaking foreign tongues and of working miracles. It evidently was of this extraordinary nature, because it was something apparent and visible. Simon perceives an immediate and marked effect, resulting from the laying on of the hands of the apostles; and if it had not been accompanied with some visible sign, but had only been a work of sanctification upon the heart, he never would have offered to have purchased it with money. As it was, he undoubtedly thought the power of conveying the remarkable gift would wonderfully assist him in his juggleries. It is a matter of doubt whether this gift was bestowed upon all. It is the opinion of most commentators that it was only given to those who were to be employed publicly in the work of spreading the gospel. We answer the question, *why* this power was bestowed upon the early Christians, by reference to the events of this

16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them : only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

17 Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

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chapter. There were multitudes, among both Jews and Gentiles, who, like Simon, laid claim to superior deference, and even worship, on account of a pretended divine power. Some gave themselves out to be the Messiah; and many were esteemed among the multitudes "the great power of God." These miraculous powers, conferred upon the early preachers, would impress the multitude with the infinite superiority of these men over all their pretended teachers, break the charms they exercised over them, and unravel all their deceptions. It served to demonstrate the truth and divine origin of Christianity, to produce immediate and deep conviction of its importance, and to prepare the way for a speedy and wide-spread diffusion of its heavenly doctrines. The apostles only were endowed with this power of conferring upon the proper subjects these remarkable gifts of the Holy Ghost; and they do it not directly, and in their own names, lest they should seem to share in the glory of the work. They give themselves to prayer for this object; and the divine Spirit descends in answer to their petition.

16. *He was fallen]* Equivalent to, descended from heaven—the word used signifying, what falls in abundance, and applied to the descent of the Holy Ghost from on high.

17. *Then laid they their hands on them]* On those separated for the public work; not on all, because Simon was not thus endued. The laying on of hands, in connection with prayer, was a common and solemn ceremonial among the Jews, used when a priest or king was installed into office, a blessing sought upon a child, &c., &c. Thus old Jacob prayed for, and blessed, the sons of Joseph, placing his hands upon their heads. This custom Jesus Christ and the apostles retained. Matt. xix, 13; Acts vi, 6; xxviii, 8.

18. *When Simon saw]* When he saw the effect of the Spirit's operation, namely, heard them speaking with different tongues. *He offered them money]* He exercised his skill in legerdemain for no higher purpose than this; and his covetous heart immediately saw the great pecuniary account to which he might turn this power of conveying at once a knowledge of different languages; and as the apostles appeared to be poor men, he foolishly imagined that he might easily induce them to sell their secret. The word *simony*, signifying the

19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter : for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

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disposing and buying of spiritual gifts and offices, is derived from this transaction.

20. *Thy money perish with thee]* A fearful expression ! Some expositors have considered it an imprecation, and that Peter calls down upon him, as well as his money, everlasting perdition ; but this seems hardly to be the spirit of the gospel toward even the worst of men. Whitby and others esteem it to be a prediction of what should befall him if he did not repent, considering that his sin consisted not so much in his ambition and his avarice as in this, that he struck at the very foundation of the Christian faith, supposing that the apostles and other Christians did their miracles, in confirmation of it, by some higher act of magic than that he had learned, and so they, by the same art, could teach others to do the same works for any other end. Bloomfield gives the following as the most literal signification of the original :—“ May your money rest with *yourself*; that is, keep your money to *yourself*: (I will have nothing to do with it.) Thus it is intended to warn him of the consequences of so employing his money, unless (as he gives him to understand in verse 22) he averts it by timely repentance.” It may be considered an expression of the apostle’s detestation and horror of such a proposal, his utter disregard for the money, and a solemn denunciation of the certain and fearful consequences of such a state of heart as Simon was then in. *That the gift of God may be purchased with money]* Peter, in this expression, assures Simon and them all, that this remarkable power was not theirs to bestow, not the result of peculiar skill, not done by subtlety, but by direct gift of God, that it could not be purchased with money, and that they had neither authority nor power to delegate their work or office to another. Who has aught that does not belong to God with which to purchase his rich spiritual gifts ?

21. *Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter]* A proverbial expression in use among the Jews. Dent. x, 9; 2 Samuel xxi; Job xxii, 25. As much as if he had said, Thou hast no personal interest, whatever are thy professions, in this important matter—the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, and his extraordinary gifts. Thou hast no part among the *faithful*, and no *lot in this ministry*. The word which we translate *lot*, is to be understood as implying a *spiritual*

22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee.

23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

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*portion, office, &c. Thy heart is not right in the sight of God]* Although thou hast professed belief in the gospel, thou hast not been born again of the Spirit; thy heart is still vile, sensual, and worldly; thy purposes are not single and pure—thou desirest not the Holy Spirit to glorify God, and do good, but for the gratification of thy lusts, ambition, pride, and avarice. God sees the heart. How do ours appear in his sight?

22. *Repent therefore of this thy wickedness]* Though his act was “exceeding sinful,” still Peter commands him to the divine mercy. His case was desperate, but not hopeless. The only open door of escape for him was through repentance, and the mercy of God. The worst of sinners need not despair of his grace, if they do sincerely and immediately repent of their evil. *And pray God]* This was the next step. He was to return to him in brokenness of heart, forsaking his evil ways, and earnestly plead his grace. *If perhaps]* Expressing, as some have supposed, a doubt in the apostle’s mind whether Simon could be forgiven—a fear lest he had committed the unpardonable sin, in attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to the skill of magic or Satanic influence. The Saviour had said, referring to the course of his enemies in ascribing his miracles to the agency of Beelzebub, “Whosoever blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness.” Mark iii, 29. But the doubt of the apostle seems rather to be, not whether Simon’s penitence would secure acceptance and forgiveness, but whether, in his sordid and hypocritical state of heart, he would honestly and truly repent before God. *The thought of thy heart]* The device, the contrivance. His sin, as yet, existed in his bosom; he had not in so many words attributed the effects of the apostolic laying on of hands to magic, but his request exposed the opinion he was harboring in his heart.

23. *In the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity]* Sin, and its grievous effects, in the Scriptures, are represented by the bitter herb wormwood, and that exceedingly bitter substance, gall. Thus Moses, in Deut. xxix, 18, expresses his abhorrence of idolatry in the following language: “Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood.” And the apostle Paul, in Heb. xii, 15, thus warns those to whom he is writing, against some heinous sin: “Lest any root of bitterness, springing up, trouble you,” &c. The meaning here is, “Thou art immersed in sin of the vilest, bitterest sort, both

24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

in itself and in its consequences." By the terms *bonds of iniquity*, is expressed the strength and power over him of his sinful habits. He had become confirmed in iniquity by a long course of deceit, and was held by it, as it were, in chains of bondage. An allusion to the mode in which the Romans secured their prisoners, chaining the *right hand* of the *prisoner* to the *left hand* of the *soldier* who guarded him; as if the apostle had said, Thou art tied and bound by the chain of thy sin; justice hath laid hold upon thee, and thou hast only a short respite before thy execution, to see if thou wilt repent.

24. *Then answered Simon]* The bold impostor and hypocrite is now greatly alarmed by the solemn appearance and more solemn language of the apostles, conscience giving evidence against him, and in favor of the apostle's searching denunciations. *Pray ye, &c.]* Referring to John and other Christians who stood with Peter. We have no evidence that he *prayed for himself*. Sinners often, when convinced of their dangerous situation, call upon Christians to pray for them without putting forth any effort themselves. They are not sincere in their desires after forgiveness. They love sin and the world, but tremble in view of the judgment and eternal death. The prayers of Christians avail much when the sinner unites his penitent supplications with them, repenting of sins and trusting in the promise of God; but all the prayers and tears of pious men will not save a soul that is not truly penitent, and does not pray itself for pardon. We can only infer, from the fact that it is not stated in the account, that Simon did not repent; that he was only terrified by the solemn denunciations of Peter, but was not melted into tenderness or contrition for his sin, the solemn impression soon wearing off. If the traditions of the early Christian fathers may be relied upon, he continued the same artful, wicked impostor, opposing the religion of Christ, acquiring some repute for his bold and successful frauds and tricks, until he came to a sudden and judicial end by the providence of God.

25. *When they had testified—returned to Jerusalem]* Having confirmed the preaching of Philip, and raised up public teachers endowed with the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, they return again to Jerusalem. It was desirable that the apostles should, at this early stage of the church, be much together for counsel, to direct the work in different places, and stand prepared to enter into any open door. *In many vil-*

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

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*lages of the Samaritans]* They improve their time as they journey back, probably on foot, to stop in the different Samaritan villages on their route and preach the gospel. A very good example for traveling Christians, whether ministers or laymen!

26. *And the angel of the Lord]* Without doubt a heavenly messenger was sent to hold direct intercourse with Philip, and give him these specific directions, although some have affected to suppose that this information was given him in the form of a dream or a vision. He summons him to leave his present place of labor—marks out a definite and unfrequented course for him to pursue, without specifying the object or the termination of his journey. A midnight dream or a fanciful vision would not have thus easily drawn him away from so interesting a field of labor upon apparently so profitless an excursion; but God had a divine purpose. An inquiring eunuch is to be instructed and converted, and the Lord chose this instrumentality as the means. *Unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert]* Gaza was an ancient city, situated in the south-western part of Palestine, about sixty miles from Jerusalem. It was one of the six principal cities of the Philistines, and fell to Judah in the division of the land; but the original inhabitants were not subdued. It was formerly a large, important, and well-situated city, and was the frontier or boundary city of Canaan on the south, toward Egypt. Josh. xv, 47. This city was the scene of one of Samson's greatest feats—the lifting up and carrying off of the gates of the city. Judg. xvi, 2, 3. It was attacked by Alexander the Great after he had taken Tyre, and sacked on account of the bravery of its defenders. It was afterward rebuilt, came into the hands of the Romans, and was given to Herod the Great by the Roman emperor, and upon his death was attached to the government of Syria. It was attacked and destroyed afterward by the Jews, in revenge for the bloody attack made upon them by the Roman soldiers in Cesarea. It is to this—the desolated and forsaken state of the city—that the Scripture writer here alludes, according to the editor of the Pictorial Bible. Many commentators, however, consider that exposition of this phrase the most consistent which applies it to the *way thither*; the road from Jerusalem to Gaza, passing over a hilly, barren country, meeting no city of any note, being considered desert, or thinly inhabited. They esteem this clause to have been a qualifying phrase added by St. Luke, and not a part of the address of the angel; St. Luke desiring

27 And he arose, and went: and behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiop-

the more impressively to exhibit the providence of God, as it would seem strange that one so desirous to evangelize as Philip should be sent upon so unfrequented a road as that from Jerusalem to Gaza.

27. *A man of Ethiopia*] Ethiopia, termed in the Scriptures *Cush*, was a name given to several countries of Asia and Africa, the inhabitants of which were either completely black, or of a swarthy complexion. It was sometimes understood by the ancients as comprehending all Africa south of Egypt, including Nubia and Abyssinia; and at other times they restricted it to the country bounded on the north by Egypt, on the west by Libya, on the east by the Red Sea, and on the south by the unknown and unexplored African regions. The term *Ethiopia* was also applied, in a still more limited sense, to Meroë, situated in the present kingdom of Sennaar, which is sometimes called an island, in consequence of its being comprised within two streams rising in the Mountains of the Moon, and which either form the Nile, or contribute their waters to it. This kingdom, the capital of which was also called Meroë, extended to the source of the Nile, and, in consequence of its proximity to Egypt, a close connection was always maintained between the two countries. The indiscriminate application in the Old Testament of the term *Ethiopia* to all the countries peopled by the posterity of *Cush*, and the exclusive application of the same term by Greek and Roman writers to the countries of Africa, involves some passages of sacred and profane history in some uncertainty. The family of *Cush* spread over Arabia and India, which thus, from Egypt to the Ganges, became the land of *Cush*; but the posterity of Abraham, the Ishmaelites and the Midianites, displacing them, they were gradually forced back into Africa, which eventually became almost the sole residence of the race of *Cush*.

The term *Ethiopia*, in the present text, is probably applied to Meroë, above described, or to the province of Abyssinia, just south of it. *A eunuch of great authority*] The term *eunuch* was often used in a different sense from its *literal* or *physical* meaning. As at first real eunuchs, who had become noted for their faithfulness, were raised to offices of high trust; afterward the name came to be applied to the office, and has the same signification as chamberlain, and, in a general way, may be applied to any confidential court office. Thus, this man was a treasurer. Potiphar, who was a married man, was styled a eunuch, probably only from the office he held. Gen. xxxix, 1. The phrase *of great authority*, Doddridge and Bloomfield translate as a noun, ren-

ians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

28 Was returning; and sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

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dering it a *grandee*. A *eunuch*, a *grandee under Candace*, &c. *Candace*] This was a common, or family name of the queens of Ethiopia, as was Pharaoh of the kings of Egypt. Profane history fully confirms the fact, that many of their queens bore this title; but which of these Candacees was the one here alluded to, we cannot now tell with any certainty. *Had come to Jerusalem for to worship*] He had probably been up to attend the passover, and from this it is evident that he was a Jew by descent, or a Jewish proselyte. The religion of the true God might have been spread through this Ethiopian province, adjoining as it was to Egypt, and open to the traveling Jewish traders, through the means of Jewish emigrants; or, as some suppose, through the influence of the noted queen of Sheba, who visited Solomon, and who, tradition asserts, was converted, and introduced the worship of Jehovah into her kingdom.

28. *Read Esaias the prophet*] It was a commendable custom of the Jews, when on a journey, to employ their time in reading the Scriptures. One of their Rabbins enjoined that a Jew, on a journey, when without a companion, should study the law. There can be no better means devised to retain and increase the good impressions received at public worship than by reading the word of God. Much good is dissipated by idle conversation and thoughtlessness after a profitable religious exercise. The eunuch had been benefited at the passover; he still freshens his spiritual emotions by reading the Scriptures. His simple, studious, and inquiring piety, meets the approbation of God. He never leaves an anxious inquirer for any length of time in the dark, but soon puts into operation a train of events that brings the interested Scripture scholar under the instructions of a suitable teacher.

29. *Then the Spirit said unto Philip*] The Holy Spirit is here undoubtedly intended. The Spirit did not speak vocally, but caused the thought to arise in the heart of Philip, and accompanied it with a strong impulse to execute the purpose, with a consciousness that the suggestion was from a divine source. *Join thyself to this chariot*] The chariot is here used, by a common figure, for the person in it. Join or attach thyself to the company of this man—the person in the chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to *him*, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

30. *And Philip ran thither to him]* The alacrity with which Philip obeyed the first suggestion of duty, is worthy at once of admiration and imitation. There were peculiar difficulties in the way that would have discouraged a man of weak faith. The occupant of the chariot was an entire stranger; a man evidently of note and wealth, and a foreigner. How abrupt, and perhaps offensive, an address to such a one might be! Philip consulted not the flesh, but *duty*, and left the consequences in the hand of God. If all Christians watched the movement of the Spirit in their hearts, and obeyed every prompting to duty as faithfully, what an amount of good might be accomplished! Who could tell the limits of the benefits that would result from a constant *personal effort* on the part of all Christians to benefit others! Very often they might meet with a grateful surprise, as in the ease of the eunuch, by discovering, upon inquiry, a thoughtful and even anxious, but uninstructed heart. *Heard him read]* The eunuch read *aloud*, as was the Jewish custom. A very profitable way of reading the Scriptures, as it tends to prevent undue haste in passing over most important truths, and serves to call the attention to beauties, in both the matter and style, that would otherwise be overlooked, as well as to strengthen and benefit the voice and lungs. Mr. Jowett, in his Christian Researches in Syria, says that it is still customary for persons to read aloud, even when there is no one near, for their own gratification. "They usually go on reading aloud with a kind of singing voice, moving their heads and bodies in tune, and making a monotonous cadence at regular intervals, thus giving emphasis; although not such an emphasis, pliant to the sense, as would please an English ear. Very often they seem to read without perceiving the sense, and to be pleased with themselves because they can go through the mechanical act of reading in any way." *The prophet Esaias]* He had undoubtedly heard of Jesus at the passover, and was interested to know what all the late strange occurrences portended. He would be likely to choose for his reading those Scriptures that referred to the promised Messiah. He was now reading the prophecies of Isaiah, having a Greek copy, or the Septuagint version of the Scriptures, this language being prevalent in Egypt and the adjoining provinces. *Understandest thou what thou readest?]* Mr. Wesley here remarks: "He did not begin about the weather, news, or the like. In speaking for God we may frequently come to the point at once, without circumlocution." The question might, at first, seem almost impudent; but the fact of his being a brother Jew, the grave

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up, and sit with him.

32 The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

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appearance of Philip, his dignified manner, would serve to impress the eunuch with his authority to start such an inquiry; while the tenderness of his own feelings, and his earnest desire for instruction, made the question peculiarly acceptable to the eunuch.

31. *How can I, except some man should guide me?*] He here candidly, and with great meekness, acknowledges his ignorance, and signifies his desire to be instructed. Some are too proud to acknowledge their deficiencies, and to confess their need of a teacher. One of the first steps in knowledge is an humble acknowledgment of our ignorance. These words contain no proofs that the Scriptures cannot be understood without an authorized interpreter. The eunuch did not understand the application of the prophecy to Christ, because the gospel had not been preached to him; but now Jesus has been fully set forth in the Gospels and in the Epistles, and although in the New Testament, as well as in the Old, there may be some difficulties, the greater part, and all relating to life and salvation, is presented so clearly that "he that runneth may read," and the "wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein."

32. *The place of the Scripture*] The section, or paragraph. It was what is now the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, the seventh and eighth verses. The language here quoted from Isaiah, it will be seen, differs in a slight degree, but not materially, from the passage in our translation. Luke gives, with nearly perfect exactness, the words as they are written in the ancient Greek translations of the Hebrew Scriptures. There were many of these in use among the Jews at this time, and it was a copy of this that the eunuch was reading. *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter*] So patient—so uncomplaining—so meek—so innocent. The blessed Redeemer, in his final moments, fully fulfilled this prophecy. He patiently submitted, without resistance, and meekly bowed his head upon the cross, and gave up the ghost without complaint or murmuring.

33. *In his humiliation his judgment was taken away*] In the passage in Isaiah, according to the Hebrew version, it is rendered, "He was taken away from prison and from judgment." The word translated *prison* may be rendered *restraint*, or *oppression*. Bloomfield thus ren-

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

ders the passage from the Hebrew: "So he opened not his mouth under his oppression. From judgment was he hurried off (to death)." Lowth renders the clause, "By an oppressive judgment was he cut off." The translators of the Septuagint may have intended to express the same idea of oppression in the term *humiliation*; and the meaning of their rendering seems to be, In his low estate, his astonishing humiliation and oppression, he was refused a just trial; righteous judgment was taken from him; he was deprived of his most obvious rights. True indeed was this of Christ. He was led bound before his judges, but denied a formal trial, condemned and sentenced without a legal trial or proof of guilt, amidst the most tumultuous proceedings. *Who shall declare his generation?*] This Mr. Wesley renders, "Who can number his seed, (Isa. lii, 10,) which he hath purchased by laying down his life?" Others esteem the passage to convey an idea of death, and the extinction of a family, as of one dying prematurely and leaving no posterity. There is no one to number up, or to recount, his descendants. When he dies, it is the last of him. He leaves none behind to preserve his name and memory. Thus, when Jesus was suddenly cut off, this language might be fitly used of him by his enemies, or even his desponding friends; their hopes and expectations, to all human appearances, being thus prematurely destroyed. *Who shall declare his generation?*—Who shall number his seed? There is no one left behind. Perhaps the most natural and probable meaning of the passage is that of Bishop Lowth, Drs. Kennicott, Clarke, and others. They render it thus: "And his manner who would declare?" that is, who would bear witness in his favor. Q. D. *No one*; reference being here had to a custom prevalent in the Jewish courts. When they led a condemned criminal from the judgment-seat to execution, it was customary for a crier to proclaim aloud, "Whoever knows anything about his innocence let him come and declare it;" demanding whether any one, from intimate acquaintance with his *manner of life*, could say anything in his favor. No such favor was shown our Lord. There was no call made for an advocate, and no one volunteered his services. There is still another rendering, followed by a number of noted commentators:—"Who shall declare or describe the wickedness of this generation?" the aggravated nature of their crime being stated in the succeeding clause—*for his life is taken from the earth*] The murder of the Messiah was a crowning act of sin; it was a height of iniquity that description could not reach.

34. *Of whom speaketh the prophet this?*] A very natural and import-

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on *their way*, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou

ant question. There was nothing in the text itself to determine its reference to the prophet himself, or to some other person. While at Jerusalem, the eunuch may have heard this passage quoted by some of the disciples as proof of the Messiahship of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth; and may have heard also the answer of the Jewish teacher, who now, to avoid the necessity of receiving Jesus, although the ancient Rabbins had expressly applied this passage to the Messiah, may have referred it to the prophet himself, or to Jeremiah, as they have done since. Be the cause what it may, his mind had become peculiarly interested in the passage, and he desired to know its application. The question of Philip gave him a good opportunity to open his heart without disguise.

35. *Opened his mouth*] Commenced speaking. *Began at the same scripture*] Commenced at the passage he had just read, using it as a text, expounding it, and showing its application to Christ, and then branching off upon the general subject of Christ's death and resurrection, and the great salvation he thus accomplished. *Preached unto him Jesus*] He exhibited the conformity of Christ's life, character, and death, to the prophecies of the Old Testament; offered him to Philip as a personal Saviour from sin, and illustrated the important direction of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and the necessity of being born again and baptized with water and with the Holy Spirit.

36. *And as they went on their way*] That is, as they journeyed on in the direction that the eunuch was traveling. *They came unto a certain water*] Dr. Bloomfield says: "Probably some fountain or pool formed by a brook either running into the Eshcol rivulet, or formed at a head of the Eshcol itself." *What doth hinder me to be baptized?*] The meaning of the passage is, Here is a fit opportunity, suitable water appears in sight, why is there need of delay? Why may I not now make a confession of my faith, and attend to the initiatory rite of Christianity? It appears from this that Philip had taught the eunuch both the doctrines of the gospel, and explained to him the simple and beautiful rite by which the believer publicly signifies his faith in Jesus, and unites himself to his church.

37. *If thou believest with all thy heart*] Implying that he should not

mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

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only be convinced that Jesus was the promised Messiah, but fully rely upon him with affectionate trust as his Saviour, personally. No faith but that which “*works by LOVE* and purifies the heart” will save the soul. Thousands now believe that Jesus died for sinners, have an intellectual conviction of the truths of the gospel, who are still impenitent, to whom Christ is as a root out of dry ground. The proud, hard heart, must be broken by the Holy Spirit, feel its imminent danger, see its only Saviour, and cleave to him with all the strength of fear and all the tenacity of love, and believe with *all* the heart, without a doubt or misgiving that he will fulfill his word, that he does forgive and cleanse from unrighteousness—this is the faith that bringeth salvation. This verse is not found in very many MSS. of the first authority, and very probably has been introduced by some early transcriber, to show that the eunuch was not too hastily, or without form, admitted to baptism; and as the doctrine it involves, faith in Christ, is not a new one, but one that is found all throughout the New Testament, the passage has been allowed to remain.

38. *And they went down both into the water]* They dismounted from the chariot, and went to the water, as many commentators contend, (the preposition having as often this signification as the other,) or, as others contend, *into* the water. Dr. Clarke thinks, while Philip was instructing the eunuch, and he professed his faith in Christ, that the eunuch probably plunged himself under the water, as this was the plan that appears generally to have been followed among the Jews in their baptisms, the baptism being attributed to the person who had received the confession of faith. On the other hand, Bloomfield remarks upon this passage, after observing that, with Lardner, it was his opinion that Philip performed this ordinance by sprinkling, and not by immersion:—“On both having descended into the water, Philip seems to have taken up water with his hands, and poured it copiously upon the eunuch’s head. It is, indeed, plain, from various passages of the Gospels, that baptism was then administered by the baptizer, after having placed the person to be baptized in some river or brook; and that plenty of water was thought desirable, we learn from John iii, 23. But though this may seem to favor immersion, yet the other method might as well be adopted. Water *might*, indeed, be *fetched in a vessel* for the purpose

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

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of pouring it on the head of the person. Yet that it should *not*, may be accounted for by a reference to the climate, customs, and opinions of the people of Palestine, without rendering it necessary to suppose that "nothing but a *purpose of immersion* could originate the custom for the baptizer and the baptized to both go into water of the same depth." Even admitting that the eunuch was immersed, it does by no means prove that this was the *only* mode practiced by the apostles, or that this alone was *valid* baptism; neither does it prove that a mode which may be safely, and even with comfort, performed in these sultry climes, is to be the indispensable mode in countries where several seasons of the year render its administration almost impossible, and where its performance always is attended with more or less confusion and danger, and is ever liable to wound a refined and delicate mind. The substitution of baptistries, among our Baptist brethren, for the running brooks and pools of the New Testament, is a sad commentary upon their professions of close and absolute imitation of the practice of our Lord and his apostles in administering this rite. The very necessity for the construction of these substitutes for the Jordan, felt by themselves, shows the inconsistency of supposing that our Lord would enjoin such a mode of performing a rite which, in some countries and seasons, would be unsafe, immodest, or perhaps almost impossible, as, in our land, in mid-winter. How can our conscientious Baptist brethren be consistent with themselves, and yet perform the rite in a tank, in the house of God, in stale, and often offensive water, *artificially heated*?

39. *The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip]* Some commentators, among whom are Mr. Wesley and Dr. Doddridge, think Philip was at this time miraculously removed, being taken up bodily, and carried through the air without any exertion of his own. But the most reasonable view of the subject seems to be that the Spirit of God, operating upon Philip's mind, as he had before, when directing his steps to the eunuch, commanded his immediate departure in another direction; and that Philip, in obedience to the divine admonition, hastily left the eunuch to pursue his journey, while he traveled in a contrary direction, the Spirit *urging*, or *hurrying him away*. *And he went on his way rejoicing]* No wonder: he had now a *new book to read*; he could now *understand* the Scriptures. What was better, he had obtained a *new heart*. The fruits of the Spirit that descended upon him at his baptism, had been *love, peace, and joy*.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through, he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea.

*in the Holy Ghost.* He had received Jesus, and, with him, power to become a Son of God. He had the presence of the Comforter with him in the chariot; and it was his privilege now to go and carry the news of salvation to his friends and neighbors at home. Well might he go on his way rejoicing.

40. *But Philip was found at Azotus]* Made his appearance here. Was not observed or noticed before his arrival at this place. Azotus is the same city called Ashdod in the Old Testament. 1 Sam. vi, 17. This town was on the coast of the Mediterranean, about thirty miles north of Gaza, near where he probably separated from the eunuch, the latter traveling south, while Philip went to the north. *Preaching in all the cities]* Lying along the Mediterranean, between Gaza and Azotus,—Joppa, Ashkelon, Arimathea, Jamnia, &c. *Cesarea]* A noted city of Palestine in New Testament times, situated on the Mediterranean, not far, in a southerly direction, from Mount Carmel, some sixty miles north-west of Jerusalem. Its name anciently was Strato's Tower. It was rebuilt and greatly adorned by Herod the Great, and was called by him Cæsarea, in honor of Cæsar Augustus. A most excellent harbor was constructed here; and it became the capital of the country upon the destruction of Jerusalem.

Here Philip the deacon, and his family, afterward resided. This ancient town is now but a scene of desolation and ruin. This city must be distinguished from Cæsarea Philippi, an inland town thirty miles north of the Sea of Galilee—a village often visited by our Lord in his travels.

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## CHAPTER IX.

1. Paul, journeying to Damascus, full of rage against the followers of Christ, is stricken down to the earth. 4. He is addressed by our Lord, submits to his commands, and is called to be an apostle. 10. Cured of his blindness, and baptized in Damascus by Ananias, 18, and preaches Christ boldly. 23. The Jews lay wait to kill him; he escapes from the city by the wall, and comes to Jerusalem. 26. Joins the apostles, preaches openly, and the Grecians seek to slay him; 30, but the brethren send him to Tarsus. 31. The churches now rest from persecution, and Peter journeys through the neighboring country. 33. Heals Eneas, in Lydda, and raises Tabitha to life in Joppa, where he afterward tarried.

WE are now about to enter upon a very interesting portion of the book of Acts—the experience and personal labors of St. Paul, and the rapid spread of the gospel among the Gentiles.

Saul, afterward called Paul, we have already seen under circum-

**A**ND Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,  
2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues,

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stances at once painful and greatly to his discredit. We saw him at the murder of Stephen, consenting unto his death, Acts vii, 58; and afterward taking active measures to arrest, thrust in prison, and persecute, even to death, those who had embraced the gospel of Christ. But what a change transpires in this chapter! And what could have accomplished it but the clearest convictions of the truth of the gospel, accompanied with, or produced by, some miraculous confirmation of its divine origin!

1. *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter]* Significant of his intense hatred of, and determined purpose against, Christianity. Deep emotion, as anger, for illustration, causes rapid breathing; hence, heavy and rapid breathing may serve to express an outbreaking passion and rage. His spirit had become perfectly inflamed; he poured out denunciations and threats of vengeance against them, and burned to be engaged in their destruction. *The disciples of the Lord]* Christians. Those who professed faith in Jesus Christ. *Went unto the high priest]* This officer was the highest in authority in all spiritual matters, and also the presiding officer of the Sanhedrim. He signed the credentials of Saul, probably in the name of this council. This body exercised great authority at this time, not only over the Jews in Jerusalem and in Palestine, but all over the world, wherever Jews had emigrated, more especially in matters of religious belief. Its opinions were held in great deference.

2. *Letters to Damascus to the synagogues]* He desired written authority to act in behalf of the supreme ecclesiastical court of the nation. Damascus was a large and beautiful city, and one of great antiquity, having acquired note as early as the days of Abraham, Gen. xv, 2; and, as the capital of Syria, a province almost always hostile to the Jews, is often mentioned in the Old Testament. It is about one hundred and twenty miles north-east of Jerusalem, fifty from the Mediterranean Sea, the mountains of Lebanon lying between: it is situated in a most delightful region, watered by the rivers Amara (or Abana of the Old Testament) and the Parpha, and abounding in palm and cypress trees. It came into the hands of the Romans about sixty years before Christ, and was under the Roman authority in Paul's time. It has since suffered nearly the same fate as the cities of Palestine; but is still one of the most inviting and beautiful cities in Syria, although it is now in the hands of the ignorant and brutal followers of Mohammed.

that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

Multitudes of Jews, drawn thither either by its facilities for business, or driven away from their native land by the numerous disturbances, broils, and civil wars, had settled in Damaseus. It is stated by Josephus that ten thousand Jews were, in the reign of Nero, massacred in Damaseus, on one oecasion, and eighteen thousand upon another, with their wives and children. *To the synagogues]* To accommodate the large Jewish population, numerous synagogues must necessarily have been constructed; to the officers of these, the letters that Paul carried were probably addressed; and their eo-operation with this agent of the Sanhedrim, in extinguishing what they esteemed so grievous a heresy, is commanded. (For an account of the officers and services of the synagogue, see Longking's Notes, vol. ii, p. 225.) *If he found any of this way]* Of this way of thinking—of this sect, namely, Christians. The easy communication between Jerusalem and Damaseus, the multitudes of their own countrymen to whom they might preah the gospel, and the favorable opportunities offered by this eity, would have served to induce many of the early Christians, who fled upon the death of Stephen from Jerusalem, to make their abode there. *Whether they were men or women]* Neither sex was to be spared; so bitter was the spirit of persecution, and so ready an agent was Saul, he hurries, like a ferocious wild beast, toward the refuge of the poor wanderers, panting to fall upon them, and tear and devour them. *Bound unto Jerusalem]* So great was the authority of the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem, that the foreign Jews submitted to all its deerees in spiritual things; and the civil governments under which they lived rarely interfered in these matters; espeially would there be no obstacle thrown in the way of the execuation of these demands in Damaseus, as Aretas, king of Arabia, then ruler of Damaseus, was either a Jewish proselyte, or, at least, well affected toward them. 2 Cor. xi, 32.

3. *And suddenly there shined round about him]* Like a flash of lightning, without warning—at midday, Aets xxii, 6; xxvi, 13; no storm or clouds foretold its approach—a miraculous light shone around the place where Saul stood. So minutely are the particulars of this event described in this placee, and in the relation of his own experience before Agrippa, and so evidently unnatural and miraeulous in their character are they, that we cannot for a moment admit the opinion of certain commentators that the whole event was a natural

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord ? And the Lord said, I

occurrence—the bright light, a shock of lightning ; and the voice, the rumbling of the thunder, which the guilty conscience of Saul changed into a condemning voice. For,—

1. The light above the brightness of the sun *continues*—shines about, remaining for a certain space, while the light of the electric fluid immediately vanishes. The Greek word used here, translated light, is never used in reference to lightning.

2. The time of the day when this happened—at noon, and its suddenness.

3. The distinct appearance of Jesus Christ in the midst of the light. Verse 27 ; 1 Cor. ix, 1 ; xv, 8.

4. The extended conversation between Paul and the Lord.

5. The fact that the attendants heard not the voice, although they were conscious of hearing a sound, and both the light and the sound seeming to have a peculiar reference to Saul.

Had it been thunder, why should they have been surprised not to see a person speaking to Saul ? This light, probably, was the *glory of the Lord* that presented itself to Stephen in the moment of his martyrdom. Acts vii, 55. It was that peculiar luminous cloud called the *Shechinah*, in which God had been wont to appear to the Israelites. Exod. xiii, 21, 22 ; Isa. iv, 5, 6 ; vi, 1-4 ; Ezra x, 4 ; xvi, 7. Being the divine symbol, it would serve to impress the mind of Saul, and, in connection with the appearance of our Lord, solemnly assert his divinity, and convince the persecutor of his error and of the truth of the gospel.

4. *And he fell to the earth]* Overcome by the sudden and bright light, and awed by the manifest symbol of the divine Being. Thus was Daniel affected in the presence of a heavenly visitant. Dan. viii, 17 ; x, 8. *Heard a voice saying unto him]* In the twenty-sixth chapter, fourteenth verse, we are informed that this voice spake in the Hebrew tongue, in the dialect then spoken by the Jews. The attendants heard the sound of the voice, but it had no distinct utterance to them. They could not understand what was said, the voice addressing itself immediately to Saul. The language is solemn and emphatic, serving to fix his attention and awaken conviction. In persecuting the disciples of our Lord he persecuted the Master also, for Jesus and his true followers are one. Matt. xxv, 40-45 ; John xv, 1-6. A poor answer to this question could Saul give, but as good as any one who persecutes for conscience' sake.

5 *And he said, Who art thou, Lord ?]* Equivalent to, Who art thou,

am Jesus whom thou persecutest. *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

6 And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

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sir? He did not yet know who addressed him, although convinced that it was a divine visitant. *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest]* What an astounding disclosure to Saul at the present time, and engaged in his present business! It was not the poor, stricken, Christian men and women that he was hunting and persecuting alone, but Him who was now enveloped in the divine glory. The language is true. He did persecute Jesus. He hated his character—his spirit—his gospel—his followers. It is not the faithful minister, or the praying church, that the impenitent and bold sinner sometimes disturbs and seeks to injure, but Christ and his religion, which his depraved soul hates. *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks]* A proverbial expression in common use, and often found also in Greek and Latin writers. The word translated *pricks*, signifies a *goad*—a sharp-pointed instrument—a long stick with a steel point, used in driving cattle. The proverb is derived from the fact, that often a stubborn and ill-tempered ox, when hurried on by the driver, and urged with the point of the goad, will kick against the stick, and thus wound himself the more severely, without in the least injuring the driver. The simple meaning of the passage is, That it was utterly futile for Saul to oppose the progress of the gospel, to attempt to resist the providence of God; and that it must be attended with harm and injury to himself if he persisted in his undertaking.

We may all learn a lesson from this, how vain and dangerous it is to resist the will and providence of God—to go counter to the suggestions of his Spirit, and refuse to discharge duty when its performance is attended with some sacrifice. Its neglect will always bring upon us an infinitely greater loss!

6. *Trembling]* With surprise, fear, and guilt. *Astonished]* To find him whom he had supposed to be an impostor, the Messiah. *Said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?]* The term *Lord*, in this verse, is understood in its proper sense; he now knew who was addressing him. His proud, Pharisaic heart is subdued; from being a persecutor, he now craves to be a servant. His sincerity is evident, from the language used. 1. It is *immediate*, desiring no time to arrange his plans, but makes a surrender of himself at once. 2. He does not choose his employment, but gives himself up for any divine use. *What* wilt thou? 3. He consecrates himself wholly to his Master, giving him the direction of his life—*What* wilt Thou have me to do?

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

4. He desired to make the only possible recompence for his injury done against Christ and his church, by laboring in his behalf. He was ready now not only to profess the gospel, but labor in its spread —What wilt thou have me to do? *Arise, go into the city, &c.]* It pleases God, in conveying instruction to men under ordinary circumstances, to employ human instrumentality. It required the divine energy and a miraculous intervention to convict and change the heart of Saul; but now he could receive further instruction from one of those whose life, but a short time since, he was seeking. The lion is brought to be a lamb, and to lay down at the feet of his prey. Dr. Clarke remarks, he was sent to Ananias, “1. To show that God will help man by man, and that they may learn to love and respect each other. 2. That in the benevolence of Ananias he might see the spirit and tendency of that religion which he was persecuting, and of which he was shortly to become an apostle.”

7. *And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless]* In mute astonishment—dumb with amazement. Great and sudden terror has a tendency to take away, for a moment, the power of utterance. There seems, at first sight, to be a contradiction between Luke’s relation of the event, and St. Paul’s own account of the occurrence in the twenty-sixth chapter, fourteenth verse. Paul there says of the whole company, “We were *all fallen* to the earth;” while here it is said, they *stood* speechless. The two accounts are easily reconciled in either of the following ways: They may all at first, with Saul, have been stricken down to the earth, and while Saul, in the intenseness of his emotions, and while conversing with the Lord, remained prostrate upon the earth, the attendants may have sufficiently recovered to have stood up in mute awe gazing upon the astonishing scene;—or they may at first, while Saul fell, have *stood* transfixated with mute astonishment, until, recognizing the evident signs of the presence of a supernatural Being, they all fall upon their faces to the ground, as Saul had done. *Hearing a voice, but seeing no man]* This all appears to contradict the declaration of Paul in the twenty-second chapter, ninth verse, where he says, “They that were with me heard not the voice of him that spake to me.” The simplest, and probably the true, adjustment of the variance is, that the attendants heard a sound, perhaps an articulate utterance, but could not understand it; this being often, in the New Testament, the sense of the word translated *hear*. It might have been a *still small voice*; it was immediately directed to Saul; besides, they were overwhelmed with terror, and

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

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God might have purposely disguised the voice to them, intending the words solely for the conviction of Saul. They heard the sound of conversation, but could not distinguish the words, or understand their meaning. A similar occurrence happened to Jesus Christ, as recorded in John xii, 28, 29. *But seeing no man]* Hearing the voice, they would naturally expect to see a man conversing with Saul, but no one was to be seen. Dazzled with the light, they saw not the divine Person, manifested in the midst of the glory.

8. *And when his eyes were opened he saw no man]* He had become entirely blind. Not only had he been overwhelmed and dazzled by the light, and his sight temporarily lost, as it was with his attendants, but when they recovered he was still blind. He opened his eyes, but saw nothing. His sight had been supernaturally removed, else why were not his attendants still blind? An affection of the eye caused by excessive light would have been but of short continuance; but this lasted three days, was then broken up by a miracle, and proved to be a physical difficulty, unlike an amaurosis, arising from excessive light. Verse 18. *Led him—into Damascus]* As he was blind and helpless—to Damaseus, whither he was originally going, and where Jesus had also directed him to go, with a better commission in his heart than in his pocket. They probably were all on foot, though almost all paintings of the scene represent them on horseback. They would, as one might suppose, have placed him upon his horse, and thus carried him, if they had been riding.

9. *And he was three days without sight]* “To intimate to him,” says Mr. Wesley, “the blindness of the state he had been in, to impress him with a deeper sense of the almighty power of Christ, and to turn his thoughts inward, while he was less capable of conversing with outward objects. This was likewise a manifest token to others of what had happened to him in his journey, and ought to have humbled and convinced those bigoted Jews to whom he had been sent from the Sanhedrim.” *Neither did he eat nor drink]* His conviction of guilt was so intense, his view of Christ so overwhelming, his anxiety of mind in reference to his pardon and acceptance with God, his sincere remorse as he reviewed his past course, especially toward the church of Christ, all served to abate, and even to entirely destroy, the cravings of nature for food. Great grief always produces this

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth,

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias, coming effect. Many a penitent sinner, though perhaps not for so long a period, has sympathized with the convicted Saul in this particular.

10. *A certain disciple named Ananias]* A Christian, a resident, at this time, in Damascus, of whom we know nothing certain further than what we find here. The Greek church hold a tradition that he was one of the seventy-two disciples. We learn from Acts xxii, 12, that he was eminently pious and devout, and in good report among the Jews dwelling in this city. His residence is still pretended to be pointed out, in the street called *Straight*, in Damascus, and is revered by both Mohammedans and Christians. *Said the Lord]* The Lord Jesus Christ. *In a vision]* By a supernatural appearance, either while sleeping or when awake, presented this direction to his mind, leaving no doubt of its divine origin. The minuteness of the command also attested its source. He was to go into a particular street, to a definite house, &c.

11. *One called Saul of Tarsus]* Tarsus, of which city Saul was a native, was the capital of Cilicia, in Asia Minor, situated on the banks of the river Cnidus, six miles from the sea. It is said once to have equaled Athens and Alexandria in polite learning. Julius Caesar, the Roman emperor, bestowed upon it the same privileges that Rome had—made it a free city. Hence Paul, from being a native of Tarsus, was *free born*. It has since, in the wars between the Greek emperors and the Saracens, experienced sad reverses of fortune, and is now a town of no importance. *For behold, he prayeth]* For forgiveness, instruction, and direction in the path of duty. He did not permit his hours of abstinence, during these memorable three days, to pass in vain regret or despairing sorrow, but continued in earnest, humble petition at the throne of all grace. Penitent prayer will ever find acceptance with, and receive a blessed answer from, our heavenly Father.

It was undoubtedly a surprising announcement that he should visit Saul, of whom he had only heard as the inveterate and most ardent persecutor of the Christians; and this token of an astonishing change of character was given him to assure him of the present unexpected and interesting state of that individual.

12. *And hath seen in a vision]* God in his providence graciously pro-

in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests, to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him; Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

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pares the hearts of those with whom we labor to receive our instructions. By remarkable dreams, by sudden providences, by the application of passages of Scripture, by tender memories of departed friends, by the preached word, by the direct and mellowing influences of the Spirit, the heart is softened, and made ready to receive our counsels; and at the same time the Spirit draws us, if we are attentive to its impulses, toward these subjects of gracious impressions. Saul is prepared to receive this Christian stranger with confidence, by this supernatural vision given in answer to his prayer.

13. *Ananias answered, Lord]* There is some apology for Ananias thus questioning for a moment the wisdom of God in this commission, in that it all transpired in a dream or trance. But how liable are we, and how improper and wicked it always is, to question the propriety of God's providences concerning us, and to resist for a long time the convictions of duty, because they seem to run counter to the dictates of worldly wisdom. Ananias had heard from *many*—from the disciples who had fled from Jerusalem, an account of the persecution of Saul and others. *Saints]* Christians. The original word signifies *holy persons*, separated from earthly things—consecrated to God. Christians should all be *saints* in this respect.

14. *And here he hath authority]* The news of Saul's visit to Damascus, and his object, had preceded his coming. Those, perhaps, who had lately fled from Jerusalem to escape his hands, brought the intelligence. How can it be, reasoned Ananias, that he is so suddenly changed? He might have suspected some snare, some hypocritical pretension, in order more successfully to get the Christians into his power.

15. *Go thy way]* The Lord cuts short the discourse, and sends him upon his office. *He is a chosen vessel unto me]* He is a well-adapted, an excellent *instrument*, which I have selected for a great purpose. It pleases God to *choose* his own ministers, and place them in the work. Thus this same Saul says, in Heb. v, 4, “No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.” *To bear*

16 For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house: and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord (even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest)

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*my name before the Gentiles]* To carry the knowledge of the true God to heathen nations; to bear the standard of the cross outside the limits of Jewry, and unfurl its banner in the eyes of all people. This was the peculiar office of Paul, and so he regarded it. Rom. xi, 13; Gal. ii, 8; xv, 16. *Kings]* Men in authority—governors—rulers. And Paul, in the discharge of his office, did bear the name of the Lord before rulers and kings—before Felix the governor, (Acts xxiv, 10–21,) before Festus and King Agrippa, (Acts xxvi, 2–29.) Through his instrumentality the same truths were heard in the palace of the Roman emperors. *And the children of Israel]* The Jews, to whom he immediately began to preach, (verses 20–22,) and into whose synagogues he always entered and taught whenever he could obtain admission. Acts xiii, 46; xxviii, 17.

16. *For I will show him how great things he must suffer]* This declaration is made probably to satisfy Ananias as to the sincerity of the present profession of Saul. He was about, by his own consent, to undergo the greatest temporal and bodily sacrifices and sufferings for the very religion whose subjects he had come to Damascus to destroy. The passage may either signify, I will bring, or introduce, him into a different scene of action, causing the persecutor to become a sufferer for the despised faith, or, as some think, I will make known to him, by revelation or in a vision, the extraordinary trials and difficulties he must endure while he preaches the gospel, and the violent death with which his career will end. Dr. Clarke well remarks:—"If so, what a most thorough conviction must Saul have had of the truth of Christianity, cheerfully and deliberately to give up all worldly honors and profits, and go forward in a work which he knew a violent death was to terminate!"

17. *Putting his hands on him]* This had not been commanded directly by the Lord, but had been implied in the relation of the vision that Saul had received. This was the usual way of conveying or imparting spiritual blessings. (See Acts viii, 17.) *Brother Saul]* After what had been communicated to him by the Lord, he was prepared to receive him as a "brother beloved," whatever his former course had been. Thus the gospel brings us all into a brotherhood, with a warm fraternal interest in, and regard for, each other. *That appeared unto thee in the way]* The manner of Saul's arrest and conviction had pro-

hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

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bably been revealed by our Lord to Ananias, and this knowledge of the extraordinary circumstances would serve still more to strengthen Saul's confidence in him. *And be filled with the Holy Ghost]* He was probably at this time, under the administration of Ananias, endued richly with both the spiritual and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, as were the disciples on the day of Pentecost, and the converts of Samaria through the instrumentality of Peter.

How unlike is this to the high pretensions of the Romish Church, and the high church party in the English Church! Here is a noted apostle endued with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and prepared to preach the word through the instrumentality of one not an apostle, or noted before or afterward among his brethren, save for his humble piety and great purity of life.

It was not Ananias, or the putting on of hands, that made Paul an apostle, but the calling of God; as he says of himself, "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.)"

18. *And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales]* There had been a crust-like, scaly substance formed upon his eye; and now this is caused in the same miraculous manner to fall off. There is, it is said, a disease of the eye known in the East, caused or aggravated by excessive light and heat, under the operation of which certain of the humors of the eye become solid and scaly. This, however, is a *lingering* disease, long in its coming on, and considered incurable, or exceedingly slow in its recovery. But Saul's was an *immediate* blindness and sudden cure. If it was caused by this disease, it was miraculously *hastened*, and, certainly, miraculously cured. *And was baptized]* Immediately—probably at the suggestion of Ananias; thus following the example of all the early converts, and making at once a public profession of his faith. What evidence is there that he left his room, where he had been prostrated by agony and blindness, and was now faint with hunger?

19. *When he had received meat]* Taken food; as his mental anxiety left, he was conscious of the claims of nature. The heart was now right, and he could eat with comfort. *Certain days]* Some days.

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

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How long, is not known; it was, undoubtedly, a considerable period. At least three years elapsed before he went to Jerusalem, a part of which time he spent in Arabia. Gal. i, 17. *With the disciples which were at Damascus]* A church had probably been formed, and regular assemblies were held. Saul, although learned in the Jewish law, was a novice in the gospel. The teacher of others must first be taught himself. He now sits at the feet of these humble, pious men and women, as before he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel, to be instructed more fully in the plan of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

20. *And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues]* His conversion must have been startling to the Jews; the manner of it astonishing. The new convert desired to make all possible use of any reputation he may have had, in doing good to his own nation, and honoring Christ. He entered the synagogues, to whose officers he had letters and credentials directing them to co-operate with him in exterminating Christianity in Damascus; and, to their utter surprise, advocated the same faith. In his own masterly way he demonstrated the truth and divine origin of the gospel, illustrating his arguments by his own unanswerable experience. *That he is the Son of God]* This was the point of all his addresses, that Jesus was the Messiah; for this was, and is, the great point in controversy between the Jew and the Christian.

21. *But all that heard him were amazed]* Confounded; and no wonder: the change was so sudden and so great. *Called on this name]* Addressed Jesus as their Lord—prayed in his name. *For that intent]* With this design; having this object in view.

22. *But Saul increased the more in strength]* By the use of his gifts and talents, they were increased, while his faith and boldness were daily increased by the society, prayers, and exhortations, of the church, by more thorough acquaintance with the gospel, and by richer bestowments of grace from on high. *And confounded the Jews]* Overwhelmed them in the argument, taking away the force of all their objections, and presenting and pressing reasons that could not be successfully removed. *Proving]* Evincing, showing evidently—

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him.

24 But their laying wait was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

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the word signifies, *to put together* like carpenter's work; as, in an argument, the various reasonings and facts are all carefully brought together, and placed each in its proper place, until a perfect and well-adjusted whole is formed by the perfection and unity of the parts. *Is very Christ]* That is, is the Christ, this being the meaning of the original. He proved that he must be the promised Messiah.

23. *And after that many days were fulfilled]* Were passed—had elapsed. The events described in this, and the succeeding verses, transpired after Saul's return from Arabia. This journey, and what were the engagements of the apostle during this tour, St. Luke has not related. The evangelist has barely stated the fact that considerable time ensued before a persecution broke out against Saul. Taking into account the faithfulness of the young apostle, the effect that must have been produced by his remarkable conversion, it would be a matter of wonder that he should have been permitted, for any length of time, to continue his course of public teaching. An incidental remark of the apostle himself, while conducting an argument to prove that he had received his apostleship, not from man, nor even from the other apostles, but from God, explains the passage. He was not persecuted; for he was not in Damascus. Soon after his conversion, as it appears from his own statement, (Gal. i, 17, 18,) he journeyed into Arabia, probably preaching Christ in the Jewish synagogues, and perfecting his knowledge of the gospel of Christ. The time spent here was three years, after which he returned again to Damascus. Thus happily do the different portions of Scripture *tally* together. In the epistle written by St. Paul, he had no design of filling up what was an intentional omission in the history of St. Luke, because it was an unimportant fact; but, by his incidental allusion, without intending it, he fills an evident space, and thus confirms the relation of Luke. *Took counsel]* Formed a design.

24. *But their laying wait]* Their plot to kill him. *Was known of Saul]* By some means was *made known* to him. *And they watched the gates day and night, &c.]* Large cities were formerly surrounded with high walls, to preserve them from the attacks of an invading army, (as are some at the present day—Paris, the capital of France, for instance.) These cities can only be entered through their gates, which can be easily guarded; and thus the ingress or egress of any one into, or from, the city can be easily prevented.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket.

26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

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We are told, in 2 Cor. xi, 32, that the governor of Damascus, under King Aretas, kept the city with a garrison to prevent the escape of Saul. The two accounts are easily reconciled by supposing that the Jews watched in company with the Arabian soldiers. The governor of the city might have been a Jew, and thus was interested in the matter; at any rate, they were authorized by King Aretas, who was an ally of the Jews, Herod having married his daughter.

25. *Let him down by the wall in a basket]* Either through the window of a turret upon the wall, or of a house standing near the wall, the upper windows of which overlooked it. Through such an aperture as this, the disciples, favored by the darkness of the night, lowered the apostle down *by the side* of the wall. This escape was very similar to that of the spies from Jericho, they being let down by a rope from the house of Rahab, which was built upon the "town wall." Josh. ii, 15. To this day, this method of admitting and sending away persons is practiced, when any danger is apprehended. Thus, at the monastery of Mount Sinai, where the attacks and plunderings of the Bedouins are feared, all persons enter and pass out by being hoisted up and lowered out of a door or window in the outer wall.

It was proper for Saul to use all suitable means to save his life; it was not a dictate of cowardice, but obedience to the command of Christ: "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another." Matt. x, 23. We are required to offer up our lives for Christ's sake, when we cannot save them without denying him, omitting duty, or breaking some command.

26. *And when Saul was come to Jerusalem]* He probably went there immediately. It was now three years since his conversion. *He assayed to join himself to the disciples]* He attempted, endeavored to join their company—went to their meetings as a follower of the same Jesus. *But they were all afraid of him, and believed not, &c.]* Perhaps they had not heard of the fact of his remarkable conversion, and they only knew him as the violent persecutor, breathing out threatenings and slaughter. Or if they had heard of his conversion, his three years' absence from Jerusalem, spent in obscurity in Arabia, would serve to obliterate the freshness of the impressions produced by the event, and to induce them to distrust even its reality. If he had been soundly converted, they might have reasoned, Why has he

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

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not shown himself before this at Jerusalem? The next verse seems to convey the impression that they had little or no knowledge either of his conversion or of his faithfulness in preaching the gospel. They, therefore, looked upon him as a spy, and avoided his presence.

27. *But Barnabas took him]* Some suppose that Barnabas was acquainted with Saul, being a resident of Cyprus, an island not far from Tarsus; it has been even conjectured that he was also a fellow-student of Gamaliel. Barnabas was a man full of the Holy Ghost, a generous, self-denying man, and a proper one to perform this office of kindness. Acts iv, 36, 37; xi, 24. He had made himself acquainted with the events of the last three years in Saul's life, and become his advocate. He rehearsed this to the disciples. A strong friendship grew up between them, and they were companions and fellow-laborers during the first missionary tour in Asia Minor. Acts xi, 25, 26, 30; xii, 25; xiii, 2, 50. *Took him, and brought him to the apostles]* As we sometimes say when we assist a person, we *take him by the hand*—undertake his cause; this is the signification of the passage here. He gave him his countenance and society, took upon him to advocate his cause, and introduced him to the apostles; that is, to Peter and James, for the others, it seems, were not then in Jerusalem. Gal. i, 19. *Declared unto them]* Described, related the marvelous events connected with his conversion, and his faithfulness in Damaseus.

28. *And he was with them coming in and going out]* Upon terms of familiarity and perfect equality, conversing freely, giving and receiving views upon the gospel, of which they were alike apostles. The time he spent was but fifteen days. Gal. i, 18.

29. *Spake boldly]* Openly, perhaps in their synagogues. *The Grecians]* That is, Jews who had been born in Grecian cities, and those who had been proselytes, who spake the Greek language, and for whom the Greek, or Septuagint translation of the Scriptures had been made. Many of them preferring to spend their last days, and die in the precincts of the Holy City, had obtained a permanent residence, while others, perhaps, were sojourners for a limited time.

30 *Which* when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified: and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

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They had, it appears, synagogues by themselves. (See Acts vi, 1.) *They went about]* Formed their plans.

30. *Cesarea]* (See Acts viii, 40.) Cesarea of Palestine, (and not Cesarea Philippi,) situated on the seacoast, from whence Saul would be likely to secure a passage in some vessel sailing for Tarsus or the adjoining ports, as probably he thus sailed from port to port, preaching on the way. *And sent him forth to Tarsus]* His native city, verse 11; where he would be beyond the power of the Jews, and be able to do greater good among his immediate neighbors and fellow-citizens.

31. *Then had the churches rest]* As some say, because Saul, who was one of the chief instigators and most active agents in the first persecution, being converted, the arm of the enemies of the Christians was weakened, and there being no other leader to take his place, and carry on the bloody strife, it subsided. Another reason might have been, the removal of so many Christians to distant places, out of Palestine, on account of the persecutions; but the most probable reason is, the serious civil commotions that disturbed at this time the whole Jewish nation. A movement of the Roman emperor, Caligula, threatened to involve the nation in war with the Romans; and so occupied were they with their own concerns, that the progress of the Christian church was unnoticed, and the sword of persecution sheathed. *Were edified]* Were built up in knowledge, faith, and holiness, and also increased in numbers. *Walking in the fear of the Lord]* Living and discharging the duties of life with a filial fear of God, as a constant element in the soul. Acting, speaking, and thinking as under the eye of God, and fearing to do aught that would meet his disapprobation. *Comfort of the Holy Ghost]* Enjoyed the presence, the witness, and all the heavenly offices of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and lives. *Were multiplied]* Increased in numbers. A holy, humble walk, on the part of Christians, and the presence of the Holy Ghost, will always secure prosperity and increase in the church.

32. *And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters]* The sacred writer introduces here a short summary of the labors of Peter

33 And there he found a certain man named Eneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

34 And Peter said unto him, Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

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out of Jerusalem. With the exception of a short visit to Samaria, (Acts viii, 14,) he had confined his labors to Jerusalem; in the critical and persecuted state of the church in that city, and on account of the opportunity of reaching distant places through the conversion of foreign Jews who might come up to Jerusalem, he, with the other apostles, had remained in the Jewish metropolis. The period of persecution being now, for the time being, passed, and the church being tranquil and settled, he takes this opportunity of journeying to the neighboring churches to confirm and strengthen them, and to secure, through the preaching of the gospel, an addition to their numbers. *Throughout all quarters]* Visited the various places where the gospel had been preached, and a church gathered. *Lydda]* This was an ancient town, situated about fifteen miles south-east of Joppa. It is mentioned by Nehemiah (vii, 37) under the name of Lod; and, in New Testament times, had reached the size and appearance of a city. It was noted as the birthplace and residence of several of their famous rabbins; and, after the destruction of Jerusalem, became the seat of one of the rabbinical schools. It afterward became the seat of a Christian bishopric, and was noted for its church, reputed to have been built in honor of St. George, of Cappadocia, who was said to have been martyred and buried at Lydda. It is now a heap of ruins.

33. *Eneas]* A Greek name. He was probably what was called a Hellenistic or Grecian Jew. *Which had kept his bed eight years]* Under a severe, and, to all human means, incurable attack of the palsy; he had become *bed-ridden*, as we say, that is, confined almost all the time, for eight years, to his bed.

34. *Jesus Christ maketh thee whole]* Or, literally, *Jesus, the Messiah, healeth thee.* It may be on account of the humility and piety of this man that God permitted this miracle to be wrought upon him, but chiefly to call the attention of the inhabitants of this vicinity to the preaching of Peter, and to serve as a confirmation of the truths he uttered. Observe the care with which Peter guards against the miraculous power being attributed to himself—*Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.* Peter was only the instrument. *Arise, and make thy bed]* To exhibit and confirm the truth of the miracle. For eight years he had been helpless, not rising without aid, his couch being

35 And all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas; this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.

arranged and prepared by others; but now, at once, he rises from his couch alone, and smooths his bed.

35. *And all that dwelt in Lydda]* That is, a great multitude of the inhabitants of these towns turned to the Lord. The effect of this cure was so general, that it seemed as if the whole town was moved. *Saron]* Called, in the Old Testament, *Sharon*. It was a highly fertile plain, stretching from Cesarea to Joppa; bounded on the east by the mountainous range that runs south-eastward from Mount Carmel, and on the west by the Mediterranean shore. Its great beauty and richness made it, in early times, celebrated in Hebrew poetry. Continued allusions are made to it in the Old Testament: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." Song of Solomon i, 1. "The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon." Isa. xxxv, 1, 2. It abounded in olive orchards and clustering vines, but is now a scene of desolation, only exhibiting the evidences of former fertility, and a capacity for the same again under proper cultivation. *Saw him, and turned to the Lord]* Came, and beheld the manifest miracle, probably having been previously acquainted, many of them, with his long, incurable infirmity, and were so convinced of the divine presence with Peter that they gave heed to his word, received, and believed in Jesus Christ, and were converted to God.

36. *Now there was at Joppa]* This was a seaport town on the Mediterranean, about thirty miles south of Cesarea and forty-five northwest of Jerusalem. It was one of the earliest seaports in the world; and although its harbor was very poor, being choked with sand, yet as it was so near Jerusalem, and the only port in Palestine proper, it acquired no small importance. In the days of Solomon it was the grand depot of all the immense preparations received from a distance for the temple. 2 Chron. ii, 16. From this place Jonah took his passage when flying from the command of the Lord. Jonah i, 3. Modern Jaffa or Yaffa, as Joppa is now called, stands on a promontory which rises about one hundred and fifty feet above the level of the sea, offering on all sides picturesque views. Its streets are very narrow, uneven, and dirty, and the houses are crowded closely together, altogether having a mean, dull, and gloomy aspect. The inhabitants are four or five thousand, the greater part Turks and Arabs. The house of the British vice-consul, in 1831, was reputed to stand on the

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose, and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and pray-

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site of the house which had belonged to Simon the tanner. *Tabitha*] A Syriac word, having the same meaning as Dorcas, a Greek term signifying a *gazelle*, or *antelope*. It has been, and still is, customary in the East to give the name of beautiful and mild-tempered animals to young women. *Full of good works and alms-deeds*] Abounding in, distinguished for her benevolent acts. Her life was filled up with charitable labors, and marked with generous gifts.

37. *In those days*] While Peter was at Lydda. *When they had washed*] The common custom before embalming. *Laid her in an upper chamber*] This was either upon, or connected with, the roof of the house, and was a room used, not for common purposes, but for prayer, for the reception of friends, or for the present solemn purpose. (See Acts i, 13.)

38. *Lydda was nigh to Joppa*] About six miles. *They sent unto him*] Perhaps to comfort them in their loss, and it may be, as they had heard of the miracle performed on Eneas, they might have harbored the hope of his raising her to life. The last clause seems to favor this supposition—they desire that he would not *delay* in coming. It was an exhibition of great faith on the part of the disciples, as no apostle had yet raised the dead. If any might have been raised, they might have reasoned that Stephen would have been.

39. *And all the widows stood by him weeping*] Persons who had been benefited by her bounty. Touching, indeed, must the scene have been. Sincere are the tears shed by the relieved and blessed over the tomb of their benefactors, and far more desirable are they than the proudest monuments or loudest eulogiums to the dead. *Showing the coats and garments, &c.*] Exhibiting such articles—outer and inner garments—as Dorcas made while living.

40. *Peter put them all forth*] It may be to avoid ostentation and display; or, as some have supposed, as Peter himself did not know whether God would raise up Tabitha, he desired to enter into earnest supplication that he might discover the will of God, and wished to

ed; and turning *him* to the body, said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa: and many believed in the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon, a tanner.

engage in prayer without distraction, or the disturbance caused by the presence of a multitude. *Tabitha, arise]* Having probably received, in answer to his prayer, the assurance that God would accomplish this miracle through his instrumentality, he turned to the dead body and thus addressed it. *And she opened her eyes, &c.]* Upon this Dr. Doddridge well remarks: "Who can imagine the surprise of Doreas when called back again to life? For the sake of themselves, and of the poor, there was cause of rejoicing; and much more for such a confirmation of the gospel. Yet to herself it was a matter of resignation, and of submission rather than of exultation, that she was called back to these scenes of vanity, which surely would hardly have been tolerable, had not a veil of oblivion been drawn over those glories which her separate spirit enjoyed. But doubtless her remaining days were still more zealously spent in the service of her Saviour and her God. Thus was a richer treasure laid up for her in heaven, and she afterward returned to a more exceeding weight of glory than that from which so astonishing a providence had recalled her for a season."

41. *Saints and widows]* The believers, and the widows who had been in the room previously. In the early Christian church widows formed a distinct and separate class. *Presented her alive]* Showed her alive—introduced them to their friend unexpectedly returned from so solemn a journey.

42. *Many believed in the Lord]* In Jesus Christ, in whose name the miracle had been wrought. They therefore became his disciples.

43. *Simon a tanner]* "The trade of a tanner was so contemptible," says Dr. Townsend, "that all those who followed it were required to mention it before an engagement of marriage, or the nuptials were declared void." It is recorded in the Mishnu, that after the death of a man whose brother was a tanner, the widow was permitted to decline marriage with that brother, as the Jewish law commanded under such circumstances. This custom is thought to explain the introduction of what might seem a trivial circumstance—the lodgings of the apostle, and the trade of the person whose guest he was. Such a victory had St. Peter obtained over his prejudices and Jewish scruples, that, apostle as he was, and with the whole town moved in his favor,

and multitudes convicted and undoubtedly willing to open their doors for his accommodation, he chooses to abide with an humble countryman, of a mean and despicable trade, in their estimation. It was from their superstitious regard for ceremonial cleanness and uncleanness that they were led to such a mean estimation of a valuable and honorable employment. No honest business is despicable.

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## CHAPTER X.

1. The vision of Cornelius, the devout centurion. 5. He is commanded to send to Joppa for Simon Peter for further instruction. 9. Peter, by a vision, is made to give up his Jewish scruples, and is prepared to go to the Gentile Cornelius. 17. At this time the servants of the centurion are at his gate, and he goes with them to Cesarea, and preaches the gospel to them. 44. The Holy Ghost falls, and Peter baptizes them in the name of the Lord.

THERE was a certain man in Cesarea, called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*,

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Up to the present time the labors of the apostles and disciples had been wholly confined to the Jewish nation and Jewish proselytes. They undoubtedly believed that the gospel was to be eventually spread among all nations; but they supposed that the Gentiles must first become Jewish proselytes, be circumcised, and conform to the Mosaic discipline, before they could become proper followers of the Messiah. It was necessary that this misconception should be removed, and that it should be understood that God had placed no difference between them in his dispensation of grace;—that in Christ Jesus there was neither Jew nor Greek, but all stood on the same footing, subject only to the same simple requirements. In the present chapter the account of the first entrance into the Gentile world of the gospel of Christ is recorded. Peter is the honored instrument of first opening the door of grace. His own eyes are enlightened and his prejudices broken up, and through him the scruples of the others are also removed, and a wider and effectual door into the Gentile world is thrown open.

1. *Cesarea*] Cesarea of Palestine, before described. Acts viii, 40. *Cornelius*] A Roman name. He was doubtless a Roman. *A centurion*] A Roman officer commanding a hundred men. Cesarea being the usual residence of the Roman governors of Palestine, many officers and an efficient guard would be likely to be concentrated here. *The band called the Italian band*] The term *band* had nearly the same signification in the Roman army as our military word *company*, or rather *regiment*. It numbered between five and six hundred men. It

2 *A devout man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.

3 He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

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was called the Italian band, because the soldiers of this regiment were chiefly natives of Italy. Most of the soldiers employed in overawing the provinces were probably levied from among the inhabitants of these provinces ; but there were perhaps veterans, who, in the unsettled and greatly disturbed state of Palestine, and for the purpose of being a body-guard for the governor, had been summoned from Italy.

2. *A devout man*] A pious man. He was a proselyte in belief and religion, although not by circumcision and profession. He appears to have been a *proselyte of the gate*, as they were termed by the Jews, to distinguish them from those who were called *proselytes of righteousness*, who were circumcised, kept the whole law, and were incorporated with the nation. Proselytes of the gate were still *Gentiles* in the estimation of the Jews, although they acknowledged and worshiped the God of Israel ; and there was the same objection to intimate association with them, on account of ceremonial defilement, as with any Gentiles. He had become acquainted with the true God, probably, by being brought in contact with pious Jews, and witnessing their worship in some one of his military stations. *Feared God with all his house*] Acknowledged the true God, and reverenced his laws. Like Abraham, although a Gentile, he had, it appears, carefully instructed his family, and brought them up in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord.” *Gave much alms to the people*] His faith in God *worked by love*. He exhibits the sincerity of his profession by his practice. His gifts to the poor, especially to the poor Jews, were large. *And prayed to God always*] That is, he prayed with great frequency, or at all the stated hours for prayers among the Jews ; namely, morning, noon, and evening—nine, twelve, and three o’clock.

3. *He saw in a vision evidently*] That is, not in a dream, or state of ecstasy, but clearly, with his organs of vision in proper exercise, there was presented before his sight this illustrious guest. *About the ninth hour of the day*] About three o’clock in the afternoon, the hour of public evening prayer, in which exercise he was then probably engaged, after a day spent in fasting and prayer. Verse 30. *An angel of God*] A supernatural being, a heavenly messenger, such a one as appeared to Daniel (Dan. ix, 20–23) and to Zachariah. Luke i, 11. God will not leave an inquiring, anxious mind, long in doubt. He may have been seeking to know the will of God

4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:

6 He lodgeth with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

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more fully, and a providential door is immediately opened before him for acquiring this spiritual information. "A ministering servant" is sent forth "to minister to this heir of salvation." The introduction of the gospel to the Gentile world was an event of sufficient moment to be marked by an illustrious miracle, and perhaps nothing but this would have overcome the invincible Jewish prejudices of the apostles.

4. *He was afraid*] The suddenness of his appearance, the supernatural majesty of his form and bearing, with a consciousness of weakness and sinfulness, caused him, in the first moments of recognition, to be agitated and alarmed. *What is it, Lord?*] A very natural expression of surprise and fear. What is it, Lord? What is the cause, sir, of this visit? What wishest thou? Respect and surprise being exhibited at once in the expression. *Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God*] A figurative way of expressing that they were acceptable. The figure is taken from the sacrificial system of the Jews. As the incense was burned in the holy place symbolical of prayer, a perfumed cloud would ascend toward heaven. So the prayers of Cornelius are represented as rising like clouds of sweet incense, and acceptable to the divine Being. Thy continued prayers, humanly speaking, are thy constant remembrancers before God, directing his approving attention toward thee. As Diodati remarks here:—"These works of piety in Cornelius had, as we should say, kept his memory alive before God, and had, as it were, excited the Lord to remember him, to confer his full knowledge and grace upon him by his gospel after he had prepared him by those secret and initial operations of his Spirit."

5. *Call for one Simon*] It is worthy of remark, that although an angel is sent from heaven to open the way, he does not interfere with the instrumentality Christ had appointed for preaching the gospel. Simon must now be called to teach the way of life and salvation. How vain the fancy of some impenitents, who think an angel would be a more impressive preacher!

6. *Whose house is by the sea-side*] That is, his tannery was situated outside of the walls of the city, by the sea-side, both for convenience to be near the water, and from necessity, as they were forbidden by

7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;

8 And when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house-top to pray, about the sixth hour:

10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

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law to exercise this trade nearer than fifty cubits from the walls; the trade being considered detestable, the odor offensive, and as the tanners probably slaughtered the animals whose skins they prepared, their precincts would be liable to be unhealthy. *What thou oughtest to do?* Some matter of solemn moment rested upon the heart of Cornelius. He may have heard certain reports concerning Jesus Christ and the preaching of the apostles, and been under an anxiety of mind to understand the truth in reference to this matter. This he is now assured Peter will fully disclose.

7. *And a devout soldier*] A soldier who served as one of his body-guard, and also as a domestic attendant. It appears that the efforts of Cornelius to do good were not limited to his family, but were extended to the members of his company.

9. *On the morrow, as they—drew nigh unto the city*] Joppa was about thirty miles from Cesarea, so that by twelve o'clock the next day, starting soon after three, they could easily have reached there. *Peter went up upon the house-top*] Upon the flat roofs of the houses these chambers for retirement and prayer were usually constructed:—a most desirable retreat it afforded from business, for conversation, or to hold secret communion with God. The house-top itself was suitable for the same purpose when no such chamber was made. *About the sixth hour*] About noon—twelve o'clock, this being a stated hour of prayer.

10. *And he became very hungry*] This appears to have been their dinner hour, as the food was then being prepared for the family. The Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, had but two meals in a day: the first a slight meal, consisting of fruit, milk, and cheese, about ten or eleven; the most important and principal meal was at about six in the afternoon, at which time they received their friends. *He fell into a trance*] The English word *ecstasy* is derived from the Greek word signifying *trance*. It expresses a state of mind in which a person is so much engaged with a particular subject, that the exercise of his senses is suspended, and he is insensible to everything that is passing around

11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

12 Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

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him. In the case of Peter this was undoubtedly supernaturally induced, and the scene that transpired was not the result of imagination, but a divine impression produced upon his mind by the power of God.

11. *And saw heaven opened]* That is, *in appearance*, the sky above him seemed to separate, the clouds opening, as if the heavens were rent asunder. *A certain vessel]* The original standing for any article of furniture adapted to *contain* anything. *As it had been a great sheet]* Spread out like a great sail. *Knit at the four corners]* Fastened or tied up at the four corners, held by invisible hands, and thus lowered down and raised up.

12. *Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts, &c.]* All kinds of unclean animals, according to the Jewish law, or Peter could have chosen a clean one from the number, and have killed that; "the whole object of the vision being to impress on the mind of the apostle a *new doctrine*, referring to the *Gentiles only*, and not to the Jews and Gentiles together." "The sheet," says Duysing, "was a type of the *Christian church* separated from the world, which included every kind of people. It was *bound at the four corners*, (having reference to the *four corners*, or cardinal points, *of the earth*,) to signify that the whole world should be received into the universal church of God. It *descended from heaven* in the same manner as the New Jerusalem is represented in the Apocalypse; and the *drawing back* of the sheet to heaven was meant to teach us that the church, which has its origin from heaven, will return victorious to heaven." The distinction between four-footed beasts and wild beasts here is probably that by the former *tame* animals are meant.

13. *Rise, Peter; kill, and eat]* These animals were all forbidden by a positive statute in the ceremonial law. As it had been first instituted by the divine Being, he had a sovereign right to abrogate it, and he now signifies to Peter that it is no longer to be binding upon the consciences of the Christian church; that this ceremonial law, which was one of the great walls of partition between Jew and Gentile, is to be broken down, and that all nations henceforth should share equally in the covenant mercies of Jehovah. "Rise, Peter, and satisfy thy hunger from the animals before thee; it is no longer unlawful."

14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord ; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

15 And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

16 This was done thrice : and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

17 Now, while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent

14. *Not so, Lord, &c.]* He did not mean to refuse a divine command. He may not have been confident from what source the voice came. He may have considered it a temptation—a trial of his faith while his appetite was craving food ; he therefore immediately repels the offer. “Not so, sir. However hungry, I cannot eat from these, for it is directly contrary to a divine statute.” *Common]* Profane, not holy—in common use by the Gentiles, but forbidden to the Jews. *Unclean]* Ceremonially unclean, the eating of which would make them unclean legally, in the sense of their law. Read the eleventh chapter of Leviticus, and the character of this law will be seen and understood. As before said, it was to keep the Jew separate from all other nations that was a chief reason of these peculiar enactments. Lev. xx, 25, 26. The Gentile was considered unclean by them, because he used such food, and omitted those purifications that determined legal purity, and on that account they did not admit him to their religious rites ; but now these external discriminations are to be removed.

15. *What God hath cleansed]* Declared pure, or made so by removing the law rendering it unclean. The second annunciation was more clear and decided. The source from whence the voice came is made known. A greater than Moses, who wrote the law, even the divine Giver himself, speaks, and explains the reason of the command. It was because He now removed the yoke of bondage, and annulled the previous law, that the present counter command was given. “All this,” as Bishop Warburton has shown, “was equivalent to saying that the distinction between meats was abolished, and consequently that the Gentiles were to be admitted into the church of Christ.”—  
**BLOOMFIELD.**

16. *This was done thrice]* Three times ; for greater certainty, and to impress Peter with its importance, and give him time to consider it. (See Gen. xli, 32.)

17. *Now, while Peter doubted in himself]* While he considered the matter, and was somewhat at loss for its full signification. Not doubting whether the distinction of meats was abolished, but whether it implied also a removal of the distinction between Jews and Gentiles. *Behold, the men]* Here the divine hand and providence are

from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged *them*. And on the

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seen. An angel had visited Cornelius, and directed him to send for Peter; but the apostle was totally unprepared at that moment for such an interview. His Jewish scruples would not have permitted him to visit the centurion. But just in time, while the messengers are on their way, the mind of Peter is enlightened, and the path of duty clearly opened before him. Just at this moment, before the impression has in the least abated, the servants of the Gentile Cornelius call for him.—It is an interesting and profitable study to discover, along the line of our histories, the operations of this same gracious and overruling Providence. *Stood before the gate]* Before the porch or outer door.

18. *And called]* It was the custom to knock, or call aloud, and remain at the door until the master of the house, or one directed by him, came out to wait upon them.

19. *The Spirit said unto him]* The Spirit of God conveyed this strong impression, with a consciousness of its divine origin, to Peter's mind. It is not necessary to suppose that an audible voice was heard.

20. *Arise therefore, &c.]* Thus Peter's doubts were soon ended, and the full signification of the vision was explained. The Gentiles, as a people, were cleansed from ceremonial defilement by the repeal of this law; and he might now, and *must*, as sent by the Spirit, convey to them the tidings of salvation. *Doubting nothing]* Making no scruple because they are heathen. *For I have sent them]* That is, the Lord had commanded Cornelius to send them; he had directed the affair, and caused it to be done.

22. *To hear words of thee]* To receive instruction from thee.

23. *And lodged them]* Having traveled for that day, they were not

morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24 And the morrow after they entered into Cesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshiped *him*.

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in a situation to commence their journey before the morrow; and Peter now, without distrust, familiarly associates with the Gentile attendants of Cornelius. *Certain brethren from Joppa]* Six of these accompanied Peter, as we learn from Acts xi, 12. It seems to have been customary for certain of the disciples to accompany the apostles in their journeys. Rom. xv, 24; Acts xv, 3; 3 John 6. But this was a most important journey. Peter has had no opportunity of consulting the other apostles—all the occurrences will be reviewed again in their presence. He is about entering upon a new field. His eyes have been opened; but as yet, in the council of the apostles, he stands alone. It is desirable that he should have suitable witnesses, who should at once be able to bear testimony to such signal interpositions of Providence and evidences of the divine will, as might be witnessed, as well as serve as companions and counselors to him. Peter alludes to their presence in the defense of his proceedings in the apostolic council at Jerusalem. Aets xi, 12.

24. *And Cornelius waited for them]* He seems to have omitted all unnecessary duties, and to have given himself up to prayer and preparation for this interesting meeting. There are times when it is proper to lay our ordinary callings aside, and to devote ourselves wholly to the interests of the soul. *His kinsmen, &c.]* A good example; he wished to have as many profited as possible.

25. *Fell down at his feet, and worshiped him]* Prostrated his body to the earth. This was a mark of profound respect, which, in the East, is paid not only to their deities, but to monarchs, and other personages of high dignity. Among the Romans, however, this was only rendered to their gods. As a worshiper of the true God, Cornelius could not have intended to pay him divine worship. He probably regarded Peter, from the fact of the angel's commanding him to send for him, and to receive his instructions, as a divine messenger and ambassador from God, and worthy of exalted respect; and the fact that the same deference in Palestine was paid to men of eminence, justified, in his judgment, the profound deference which he offered to Peter. Probably the act was almost involuntary; and we can easily imagine his feelings by placing ourselves in his circumstances.

26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up: I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

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26. *But Peter took him up, saying, &c.]* With unaffected humility, Peter shrank from such a tribute of respect to himself, whether offered as a mark of exalted regard, or whether he conceived that the Roman centurion's respect partook too much of religious adoration. As much as if he had said, "I am not a supernatural being, nor even the angel; I am but an ordinary man; I am, with you, a worshiper of the great God alone; let me receive no respect due only to himself: stand up, and let us converse familiarly together." Dr. Dick expresses the following, among other highly appropriate sentiments, upon this passage:—"Advantages they [the apostles] undoubtedly enjoyed, in the admiration and zealous attachment of their followers, for personal aggrandizement; but they never yielded to the solicitations of ambition. The glory of their Master, and the salvation of souls, were the great objects which they steadily pursued. They were content to be overlooked and forgotten; and if they sometimes magnified their office, their sole purpose was to promote the ends of their ministry. Instead of encouraging, they immediately checked, a disposition in others to fix upon them that admiration which was due Jesus Christ, from whom their miraculous powers, and all their talents, were derived. How marked is the difference between them and their pretended successors at Rome, who, by a long train of artifice and hypocrisy, rose to a proud domination over the Christian world; or Mohammed, whose imposture rewarded him with an empire! Their disinterestedness is an evidence that they were sincerely persuaded of the truth of the gospel, and the gospel must therefore be true; for as the circumstances in which they are placed rendered it impossible that they should themselves have been deceived, so it is manifest that they could have no intention to deceive others."

27. *He went in]* He probably met him at the door, or a short distance from it.

28. *Unlawful thing]* Contrary to the ceremonial and traditional law. *Keep company, or come unto one of another nation]* With a foreigner—one not a Jew either by birth or by religion. Through their spiritual pride, and abhorrence of the Gentiles, these scruples concerning associating with foreigners had arisen to a great height,

29 Therefore came I *unto you* without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago, I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose

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far beyond what was required by Moses in the ceremonial law. They might not intermarry with the heathen; they might not eat with them, nor enter into their houses, nor walk with them in the street; in short, although they might talk and traffic with them, after the manner of those who have no personal acquaintance, they might do nothing which tended to, or indicated a closer and more enduring intimacy. Hence, the Jews became obnoxious to the heathen for their unsocial character; their practice, however, in this matter, if not their principle, was, as St. Peter intimates, well known to the heathen among whom they lived in foreign lands, as well as to those who were their masters in their own country. *God hath showed me*] By the vision two days since. *Any man common or unclean*] That is, these distinctions between the Jews and other nations were ended. They were no longer to be kept separate, as the preservers of the divine oracles, but the Gentile was to share equally with them the benefits of the new dispensation. There was now no legal or ceremonial defilement necessarily attaching to a Gentile, making him an improper associate.

29. *Without gainsaying*] Without questioning the propriety, or hesitating in the performance of the duty. *What intent*] For what purpose or reason. The servants of Cornelius had related the principal occurrences; but it was proper to seek a relation and confirmation of them from the master of the house before offering any instructions in reference to them.

30. *Four days ago*] This was the fourth day since the angel appeared to Cornelius. His servants started on the afternoon of the vision, and reached Joppa about twelve; started on their return the next day, and reached Cesarea the succeeding morning. *I was fasting until this hour*] That is, on the fourth day preceding this he had fasted until the hour he was now conversing with Peter. *At the ninth hour*] Three o'clock, P. M. *Behold, a man, &c.*] Called an angel in verse 3. The angel assumed the appearance of man. *In bright clothing*] Shining white.

31, 32. (See verses 4-6.)

surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of *one* Simon, a tanner, by the sea-side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 But in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

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33. *We are all present before God]* That is, they recognized the pervading presence of God, and had assembled in his name and fear; and were prepared with solemnity to hear and obey whatever his messenger said as from the Lord. These feelings should characterize our hearts when we assemble in the house of God to worship and hear the preaching of the word.

34. *Opened his mouth]* Began to speak. *Of a truth]* Truly. *I perceive]* I see, am convinced, by the evidence that I now have. *God is no respecter of persons]* He is not one who is partial in his attentions, and shows his favors with preference to rank, dignity, or other grounds of external superiority, to the neglect of those who are destitute of these advantages. He had formerly supposed, with his nation, that God loved and conferred his blessings upon the Jew, because he was a Jew, and withheld them from the Gentile because he was a Gentile, and that salvation was not extended to him. Peter had now learned that personal and national peculiarities neither recommended to, nor excluded a person from, the approbation of God; that the barrier between Jews and Gentiles had been broken down, and that now the gospel was to be offered to all; and every nation and individual have the opportunity of obtaining and retaining the approval of God. It is the character and state of heart, and not the nation or rank, that God regards.

35. *But in every nation]* Whether Jew or Gentile. *He that feareth him]* With a filial regard—fears to break his commands. It is synonymous in the Bible with true piety—he that is *truly pious*. (Compare Psa. xv, 4; cxi, 10; Acts ix, 31.) *Worketh righteousness]* Practicing holiness. Habitually does what is right in respect to God and man. The principle on which God accepts a person is, his having a state of heart conformed to the divine requisition, irrespectively of the circumstances of his birth and civil connections. This principle by no means implies that the kind of religious system under which a person has been brought up is a matter of no consequence; for observation, as well as the nature of the case,

shows that the false religions which prevail where the gospel is not known, really cherish and strengthen the wicked propensities of men, and make them more unrighteous and unfit for God's approval, and that, with very rare exceptions, it is only those who enjoy a religion from heaven, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, that do fear God and work righteousness. Should the case exist, however, of a person in a heathen land, ignorant of the gospel, yet becoming convinced of his need of pardon, and turning to God with a penitent heart, sincerely seeking to discover and to do his will—such a person would find acceptance with God; and, on the other hand, no one is accepted merely because he lives in a land enlightened by a revelation from heaven. He must receive the religion into his heart, and, under its influence, habitually fear God and live righteously, in order to be accepted. Upon this passage, which some have perverted to a most unscriptural meaning, Dr. Clarke makes the following remarks:—"Let it be observed, further, that no man can be accepted with this just God who does not *live up to the advantages of the state in which Providence has placed him*. Why was Cornelius accepted with God, while thousands of his countrymen were passed by? Because *he* did not receive the grace of God in vain; he *watched, fasted, prayed, and gave alms*, which they did not. Had he not done so, would *he* have been accepted? Certainly not; because it would then appear that he had received the grace of God in vain. Many irreligious men, in order to get rid of the duties and obligations of Christianity, quote this verse in their own favor, while they reject all the gospel besides; and roundly assert, as they think on the authority of this text, that they need neither believe in Jesus Christ, attend to his gospel, nor use his ordinances; for, if they fear God and work righteousness, they shall be infallibly accepted with him. Let such know, that if they had been born, and still were living, in a land where the light of the gospel had never shone, and were there following the glimmering ray of celestial light which God had granted, they might, with some show of reason, speak in this way; but as they are born and live under the gospel of Jesus Christ, God, the just Judge, will require that they *fear him, and work righteousness, according to the light afforded by that very gospel*. The sincerity, watching, praying, fasting, and alms-giving of Cornelius, will not be sufficient for those who, as it may be justly said, live in the splendors of Christianity. In such a state, God will require that a man love him with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and his neighbor as himself. And if God requires all this, will not man need all the grace that has been brought to light by the revelation of Jesus Christ, to enable him to do it?

36 The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ : (he is Lord of all :)

37 That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached ;

38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost

36. *The word which God sent]* The doctrine of Christ—the gospel of salvation, which was first sent to the Jews. *Preaching peace by Jesus Christ]* That is, a gospel of *peace*. Jesus came to bring *peace* on the earth, and *good-will* among men. The effects of his gospel are *peace* with ourselves and the world, and reconciliation with God. *Justification by faith*, and *peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ; destroy prejudices and unkindness between men and nations—as between Jews and Gentiles. *He is Lord of all]* Both of Jews and Gentiles. By this title, the exalted dignity of the Redeemer's character is expressed.

37. *Ye know]* The labors, miracles, and death of our Lord had not transpired in a corner ; they had been publicly wrought, and the fame of them had spread in every direction. The Jews of Cesarea had often seen and heard him when attending the feast ; and the city being in the province of Samaria, some knowledge of him must have been received, although indefinite, and of a doubtful character. The preceding verse, and the first clause of the present, have given much trouble to critical commentators to determine precisely the grammatical construction. The passage has been thus rendered by Professor Scholefield, as quoted by Bloomfield :—“The word which he sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, (he is the Lord of all,) ye know ; even the matter which took place throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached concerning Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him,” &c. *Began from Galilee]* In Nazareth of Galilee our Lord resided ; and here, and in Capernaum, and the neighboring towns, commenced preaching his gospel. *After the baptism which John preached]* John was the promised forerunner of Christ ; he preached repentance, the coming of the Messiah, and the necessity of a holy life—baptizing the sincerely penitent, and thus preparing the way for the preaching of the *remission of sins* by Jesus Christ. Our Lord did not preach until after his baptism by John. Matthew iii, 1, 2, 6, 11.

38. *How God anointed Jesus, &c.]* The term *Messiah* signifies, *the anointed one*, and thus, by his divine anointing, the apostle sets forth his *Messiahship*. This transpired at his baptism. As those who assumed the priestly office, and the Jewish kings, when they ascended

and with power : who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil ; for God was with him.

39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem ; whom they slew and hanged on a tree :

40 Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly ;  
 41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of

the throne, were anointed with holy oil, so our great High Priest, the royal son of David, when he entered upon his public duties as a priest, was anointed, not with the consecrated oil, but with the Holy Ghost. Thus it was foretold of the Messiah by the prophet Isaiah : "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek," &c. ; and this passage our Lord publicly applied to himself. Luke iv, 18-21. (See Luke iii, 21, 22.) *With power]* The Holy Ghost was abundantly poured out upon him. In John iii, 34, it is said, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him ;" he was endued with "the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit," conveying power to work miracles, heal the sick, raise the dead, &c. *Who went about doing good]* Beautiful and sublime is this short epitome of the life of Jesus Christ, and how true it is in its fullest sense ! His sole business, after he entered upon the duties of his office, was incessantly, and in all places, to do good to the souls and bodies of men. He did not wait for opportunities of relieving distress, but *sought them out : he "went about."* How worthy of imitation ! *Oppressed of the devil]* Demoniacs, possessed persons. Particularly mentioned, as considered the most dreaded, and most incurable affection, and therefore the healing of such the most evident token of the divine power of the Messiah. *God was with him]* None but the power of God could have accomplished the deeds he performed. Nicodemus, in his spiritual blindness, was forced to confess, "No man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him." John iii, 2.

39. *We]* The apostles ; for this they were appointed. Luke xxiv, 48. *In the land of the Jews]* In the provinces especially inhabited by Jews—Judea, Samaria, Galilee. *Whom they slew, and hanged on a tree]* "Whom they slew by hanging on a gibbet." Verse 30.

41. *Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before]* Appointed by God—set apart by the Saviour. The question why Christ did not show himself indiscriminately to all the people, and thus remove every lingering possibility of infidelity about his resurrection, has been thus answered :—1. Because it was impossible that such a thing could be done without a mob or tumult. Let it only be announced,

God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead.

"Here is the man who was dead three days, and who is risen from the dead;" what confusion must have been the consequence of such a proclamation! Some would say, "This is He;" others, "He is like him," and so on; and the valid testimony must be lost in the confusion and multitude. 2. God chose such witnesses, whose testimony should be unimpeachable; the men who knew him best, and who, by their depositions in proof of the fact, should evidently risk their lives; and, 3. As multitudes are never called to witness any fact, but a few selected from the rest, whose knowledge is most accurate, and whose veracity is unquestionable; therefore, God showed Christ risen from the dead not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen by himself; and they were such as perfectly knew him before, and who all ate and drank with him after his resurrection, and, consequently, had the fullest proof and conviction of the truth of this fact. *Did eat and drink with him*] (See Luke xxiv, 42, 43; John xxi, 12, 13.) This is stated to show the favorable opportunities that those constituted witnesses enjoyed of perfectly assuring themselves of the fact of his resurrection. They associated familiarly with him as before, being near his person, hearing him converse, eating and drinking with him, after he had left the tomb. What evidence could be more satisfactory? Can we doubt the testimony of Peter? What could he gain by falsehood? What did he not suffer in confirmation of his integrity?

42. *And he commanded us to preach unto the people*] (See Matt. xxviii, 19, 20.) It may be that the apostle now began to see and feel the full force of the Saviour's commission, to "teach *all nations*." *Ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead*] Constituted of God to be the Judge of all that were living, and all the dead; all that should be living at the last day, and the innumerable dead. Here the great and solemn fact of the final judgment, and the assembling of all the human race, before the Son of God, to be judged according to the deeds done in the body, is introduced to give full expression to the dignity of the character of Christ, and to awaken conviction in the heart of the hearers. This doctrine, Peter, and all ministers, were commissioned to preach. What shall be the condemnation of the minister in the great day of accounts who has concealed or disguised this portion of the office of Christ, (John v, 22, 27,) and failed to warn his people of the "wrath to come," and to prepare to

43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision which believed, were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

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meet the Son of God when he shall descend in the clouds of heaven to judge the world, and to reward men according to their doings here?

43. *To him give all the prophets witness]* That is, the writers of the Old Testament Scriptures evidently testify of Christ; and by symbols, ceremonies, and direct prophecies, the great object of his coming into the world is presented. (See Luke xxiv, 27, 44.) *That through his name]* Throughout the Old Testament the doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ is not taught in so many words, but is implied on almost every page. Their acceptance with God, in Old Testament times, turned upon their faithful attention to rites that they viewed to be symbolical, and to have reference to a future personage, and to receive and rely upon the promise of a future and glorious Redeemer. "Their religion," says Barnes, "consisted mainly in believing in a Messiah to come." In the prosperity foretold by the prophets, the spiritual work of Christ in the redemption and cleansing of their souls, is often clearly manifest. (See Isa. ix, 6; lii, 7; liii, 5, 6; lix, 20; Jer. xxxi, 34; Dan. ix, 24.) *Remission of sins]* Implying not only their pardon, but power over the dominion and reign of sin.

44. *The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word]* That is, the miraculous influences of the Holy Ghost were poured out upon them, as on the day of Pentecost. Whether it was accompanied with visible signs, as on that memorable occasion, is not stated; but it is probable, as Doddridge supposes, that the luminous appearance of flaming tongues accompanied the gift of the Holy Spirit, taking away all ground of unbelief in the reality of the Spirit's descent upon the uncircumcised.

45. *They of the circumcision which believed]* The converted Jews who came with Peter from Joppa. *Because that on the Gentiles also]* They were astonished, because they had supposed that the Gentiles could only receive the gospel by becoming Jewish proselytes; but here the Holy Ghost anticipates such a work, and, without their being circumcised, endows them with the same grace that the Christian Jew enjoyed. Dr. Clarke says that it was a maxim with them, that the Shechinah, or divine influences, could not be revealed to any

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we ?

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person who dwelt beyond the limits of the promised land. It was a matter of great amazement, therefore, to witness such a baptism in this Gentile city.

46. *Speak with tongues]* That is, in languages differing from their native tongue, as on the day of Pentecost. Acts ii, 4, 7, 8. These extraordinary signs of the descent of the Holy Ghost were given to prevent hypocrisy and false profession, on the part of the early members of the church, and to produce on the minds of the unconverted a solemn conviction of the divine origin and power of the gospel of Christ. (See Acts ii, 4, 7, 8.) *And magnify God]* Glorifying, praising him for the wonderful grace he had shown them in thus sending them the gospel, with the power and demonstration of the Spirit.

47. *Can any man forbid water, &c.]* Upon this miraculous baptism of the Holy Ghost, significant of their sincere belief in Jesus and their acceptance with God, Peter suggested their immediately receiving the initiatory rite into the Christian church. Can any man, after what has transpired, question the right of these Gentile converts to water baptism ? As thus God has evidently prepared them himself, and set his seal upon them, who shall dare make objection, though they be uncircumcised, to their entrance into his church ? *Which have received the Holy Ghost]* There was a difference in their conversion from any that had preceded it. Heretofore, the extraordinary influences of the Holy Spirit had followed baptism by water, and usually upon the laying on of hands by the apostles or disciples, Acts ii, 38; viii, 15-17; but in this case, without having received this ordinance, or the imposition of the apostle's hands, the divine baptism is bestowed. The reason for this is found in the peculiarity of the circumstances. These were the first Gentile conversions, the first instances in which the gospel was presented to them ; the most satisfactory evidence of the sincerity of their faith, and the soundness of their conversion, was necessary to remove any lingering doubts in the mind of Peter and those that were with him, and especially to satisfy the apostles and disciples at Jerusalem, who had not been favored with the miraculous vision that Peter enjoyed. It was necessary, too, that they should be convinced of the propriety of their being baptized and admitted into the church, as well as to be assured of their conversion. This was all accomplished by the

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

descent of the Spirit. Without prayer, or intervention on the part of Peter, the Spirit publicly and significantly indicated their acceptance with God, and set upon them the distinguishing seal of discipleship. There could be no doubt now of their genuine conversion; and, as they had received the divine badge of church membership, there could be no propriety in withholding the lesser ordinance of baptism, or in refusing formally to receive them into the church, whom God had already signally owned as his children.

Mr. Ripley (a Baptist) makes the following appropriate remarks upon this verse:—"Though this instance of the Spirit's being granted *before* baptism is the only one on record in the Scriptures, and was, therefore, a departure from the ordinary manner in which God bestowed his special favors; yet it is a clear proof that the external ordinance of baptism is not a necessary preliminary to the reception of God's special favor, or to the manifestation of his pardoning love. Cornelius was evidently in favor with God before he had been made fully acquainted with the gospel—though he had not in his own mind a satisfactory view of this—and after having been instructed in its leading facts by the apostle, the miraculous influences of the Holy Spirit, which were then the outward manifestations of the divine acceptance, were *before* his baptism freely shed upon him. While, then, we conscientiously observe our Lord's command to be baptized, as well as to believe in him, let us not place reliance on an external rite, as securing for us the divine favor; but regard the external rite as the divinely appointed token of our believing in Christ." It may be well, also, to remark to those who overlook the significance and importance of this office, that although these persons had actually become members of the spiritual church of Christ—though they were pardoned, filled with the Holy Ghost, and endowed with the miraculous gift of tongues, still they were required by the apostle to receive *baptism by water*, in order to become members of the Christian church. "So we find that Jesus Christ had his *water baptism* as well as John; and that even He who gave the baptism of the *Holy Ghost* required the administration of *water baptism* also. Therefore, the *baptism of the Spirit* did not supersede the *baptism by water*; nor indeed can it; as *baptism*, as well as the *supper of our Lord*, were intended not only to be means of grace, but standing, *irrefragible proofs* of the truth of Christianity."—CLARKE.

48. *And he commanded]* It appears that the apostles themselves rarely baptized, but gave this office to some of the disciples. (See John

iv, 2; 1 Cor. i, 14.) It may be in this case, to avoid caviling, to commit, and to obtain the co-operation of these Jewish brethren in the new work of discipling the Gentiles, and to prevent any spiritual pride in the hearts of those who had been baptized by an apostle, in contradistinction to others who had been baptized by evangelists or disciples. *In the name of the Lord]* In the faith of the gospel, in the belief of the Messiah and redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ, acknowledging him to be their Lord and Master. *Then prayed they him]* They were newly converted, and, like babes, they "desired the sincere milk of the word." They wished to be further instructed in the doctrines of the gospel and the duties of Christians. Young converts, too, feel a strong affection for the servants of God who are instrumental in their conversion, and are greatly pained when, in the providence of God, they must necessarily be separated from them.

## CHAPTER XI.

1. Peter accused of going to the Gentiles, makes his defense in the council at Jerusalem. 18. Peter's address is favorably received. 19. The gospel spreads into Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch, and Barnabas is sent to confirm them. 26. The disciples first called Christians here. 27. Relief sent to the brethren in Judea in time of famine.

**A**ND the apostles and brethren that were in Judea, heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

1. *And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea]* The disciples who were in Jerusalem, and in the different parts of Judea. *Heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God]* Before Peter's return, the tidings of this extraordinary circumstance reached the ears of the Judean Christians. They had not yet discovered the intention of God toward the Gentiles, but esteemed them still unclean, and beyond the offers of salvation, until they became proselytes. They were, therefore, greatly shocked to find that Peter had visited familiarly in a Gentile family, preached Christ to them, and admitted them to the rite of baptism, significant of their reception into the church of God.

2. *They that were of the circumcision contended with him]* That is, the Jewish Christians, who had been circumcised, and still held as binding the ceremonial law of Moses, entered into controversy, expostulated with Peter. This shows, evidently, that the primitive church

3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

4 But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it by order* unto them, saying,

5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descending, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:

6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay, and eat.

8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that call not thou common.*

10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.

11 And behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Cesarea unto me.

12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

accorded no superiority to St. Peter, neither considered him in any manner as being the infallible head of the church, whose decisions must be positively obeyed. Far different was his authority from that of him who styles himself the successor of St. Peter, and is so esteemed by the Roman Catholics.

3. *Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised]* (See preceding chapter, verses 10-28.)

4. *Peter rehearsed]* Related, went over the facts, stating all the remarkable incidents, providences, and divine intimations, that had occurred. *From the beginning]* From the vision which he saw, which had produced the first impression upon his mind of the will of God to the Gentiles. *And expounded it by order]* That is, explaining the different facts in their connection with each other, and exhibiting them in the order in which they occurred. From this peculiar mildness and cheerfulness in explanation, a most profitable lesson may be learned as to the proper way of treating religious controversy. A short period spent in mutual explanations, in the rehearsal of providential facts and personal experience, would often become a happy substitute for months and years of unprofitable conflicts and bickerings.

5-11. (See Acts ix, 33.)

12. *These six brethren* of Cesarea had come up with him to Jern-

13 And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;

14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God?

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salem, probably by the request of Peter, who anticipated, if he had not already heard, the reports of the affair that had been received by the disciples there.

14. *Whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved]* This is implied, not directly stated, in the language recorded in the tenth chapter, as the words of the angel, "He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do;" that is, He shall point out the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ; teach thee how thou shalt still further obtain the favor of the God whom thou worshippest, and how thyself and thy whole household may secure everlasting salvation.

15. *And as I began to speak]* While I was speaking; before I had finished; not long after I began. The descent of the Holy Spirit was sudden and unexpected to Peter himself. He had but just opened the subject of Christ's messiahship, his death and resurrection, and the object of his coming, which the believing and penitent hearts present at once received as truth, and relied upon it, when the Holy Spirit cut short the work, and sealed them visibly as the disciples of Christ. *As on us at the beginning]* As the Holy Spirit fell on the apostles and disciples at its first miraculous outpouring on the day of Pentecost, accompanied by a visible symbol of its presence.

16. *Then remembered I, &c.]* This promise they had called to mind before, when the church was small, soon after the resurrection of our Lord, (Acts i, 5,) and it had been fulfilled. Peter had discovered that it had a wider meaning, and recognized the presence and fulfilled promise of his Master, wherever the baptism of the Holy Ghost was poured out.

17. *What was I, that I could withstand God?]* If God, who established the ceremonial law, and who prepared and sent into the world the gospel of salvation, abrogated his own law, took away the uncleanness from the Gentile world, and commanded that the gospel

18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, traveled as far as Phenice, and

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should be preached to them also, who am I, what is my authority, that I should resist the will of God, and refuse to receive those whom he has before received?

18. *They held their peace]* The facts were so convincing, the divine attestation so unmistakable, that they could not find any argument to oppose the explanation of the apostle. *And glorified God, saying, &c.]* Convinced by the testimony of Peter that the grace of God was evidently extended to the Gentile also, their opposition was now turned into joy, and they magnified or praised God for his great grace bestowed upon the Gentile, as well as upon the Jew. *Repentance unto life]* The grace of repentance, which, when accompanied with faith, secures a present spiritual and an eternal life. The word means, *a change of mind*, and, consequently, of life, and may refer to the change in their religious views, from idolatry to the worship of the true God, or a change from their contempt for the Messiah to a love for him.

19. *Now they which were scattered abroad]* A new subject is now introduced. The first part of the book of Acts is taken up principally with the preaching of the gospel among the Jews; but now the field is greatly enlarged, and the wonderful operations of divine grace, in connection with the faithful labors of the early Christians, are here related. *Scattered abroad]* In Acts viii, 1, we are informed that, in the persecution that arose immediately upon the death of Stephen, in which Saul was a noted actor, the church in Jerusalem was scattered in every direction, some remaining in Judea and the adjoining provinces, but many removing beyond the Jewish territory, into foreign lands. *Phenice]* By this, the country of Phoenicia is supposed to be meant, a province of Syria, north of Galilee, and bordering upon the Mediterranean, in which were the noted cities of Tyre and Sidon; but the editor of the Pictorial Bible remarks:—“This was so near—being, as it were, a part of Palestine when under the same government—that we are more inclined to agree with Dr. Wells, and a few others, who think that the seaport of this name, in the Island of Crete, is denoted.” *Cyprus]* A large island in the Mediterranean, off the coast of Asia Minor, north-west of Palestine, formerly noted for its exceeding fertility and the luxury of its inhabitants. It was the residence, and probably the native city, of the

Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

apostle Barnabas. It enjoyed the labors of both Paul and Barnabas in preaching the gospel; two of the cities, Salamis and Paphos, are mentioned in the Acts, (xiii, 5, 6.) Many Jews settled upon this island, and had synagogues in its cities. *Antioch]* There were two cities of the same name both referred to in this book; one was situated in Pisidia, a small province of Asia Minor, of which it was the capital, Acts xiii, 14; the other was the capital of Syria. The latter, which is referred to in this passage, was a very large and celebrated city of antiquity. It was situated on the River Orontes, and was built some three hundred years before Christ. It was the third great city in the Roman provinces, only inferior in size and opulence to Alexandria and Seleucia, and not inferior to these in luxury, effeminacy, and licentiousness. It was well known among, and largely populated by, the Jews on account of the civil and religious freedom they were permitted by Seleucus, its founder, to enjoy therein. Probably the early Christians were permitted to enjoy the same license to worship without disturbance on the part of the civil authorities, and on this account a large number collected here. Antioch was the birthplace of St. Luke. St. Paul and Barnabas remained in this city preaching the gospel successfully for a considerable time. St. Ignatius, the friend and disciple of St. John the apostle, and a martyr for the Christian faith, resided here, and was, if not the first, one of the first of its bishops; and here, at the end of the fourth century, flourished and preached St. John Chrysostom, also its bishop. This city continued for years to be the see of the chief patriarch of Asia. It has suffered more severely than any other city from fire, famine, war, earthquakes, and a continual change of masters. In 524 and 526 it was almost entirely ruined by successive shocks of earthquake; and in 540, and again in 574, it was captured by Chosroes, the Persian. In 638 it fell into the hands of the Saracens, and remained in their possession till 966, when it was recovered by the Greek emperor; but it was in 970 again taken by the Saracens, and remained in their possession till 1098, when, at the expense of immense bloodshed, it was captured by Godfrey of Bouillon, at the head of the Crusaders, who established there a principality, which long survived their kingdom of Jerusalem. In 1268 it was wrested from them by Bibans, the Mamaluke sultan of Egypt, when forty thousand Christians were put to death, and twice that number made captives. Since that period it has remained in the hands of the Mohammedans, though frequently changing masters.

20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

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among them, and has now nothing left but its ruins to bear witness to its ancient prosperity. *Preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only]* These Christian Jews who were so early scattered had not yet been enlightened as to the full object of the gospel, but supposed, as did all the apostles until the vision of Peter, that the gospel, like the Mosaic economy, was limited solely to the Jews, and, therefore, they felt no liberty to offer it to the Gentiles.

20. *Cyrene]* This was the principal city of the province of Libya, in Africa, a part of what is now the kingdom of Barca; the province is sometimes called Cyrenaica, and by Luke is called Libya about Cyrene. Acts ii, 10. This city was inhabited by many Jews. It was a Greek colony, and the Greek language was generally spoken here. These men of Cyprus and Cyrene were present at the Pentecost, and were there converted. In the persecution, they left Jerusalem, and, coming to the city of Antioch, abode there awhile, preaching the gospel. *Spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus]* There is not a little controversy among commentators as to who were intended by the term here translated Grecians. In all but two manuscripts in the original, the word is *Hellenistas*, which always refers, in the New Testament, to those Jews who, residing in foreign cities, spoke the Greek language. The meaning of the text, then, would be, that these converted Grecian Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene addressed the Hellenistic or Grecian Jews in Antioch, and preached to them the gospel. For this rendering, Bloomfield very strenuously contends, showing, as he thinks conclusively, that this is the true version, and that none but this can make the text consistent with other assertions in the sacred book. We are told, in the preceding verse, that the word was preached *unto the Jews only*; and by him it is supposed that the present preaching of the Cyrenians and Cyprians was immediately after the martyrdom of Stephen, and before the vision of Peter showed the propriety of preaching to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. On the other hand, the majority of commentators receive the reading of the two manuscripts, *Hellenes*—Greeks, referring to the Gentile Grecians who inhabited Antioch. They suppose these men preached to Gentiles as well as Jews; and they reconcile this with the statement of the preceding verse, by supposing that some time may have elapsed between the time when this was stated and the occurrences contained in this verse, and that their preaching to the Grecians probably transpired

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

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after they had heard the account of the vision of St. Peter; for, they reason, these persons may not have been those who fled immediately upon the death of Stephen, or they may not have at once gone to Antioch, or, if there, may not have addressed the Grecians until after Peter's visit to Cesarea.

21. By the *hand of the Lord*, is meant in Scripture any display of his power. Psa. lxxx, 17. The blessing of the Lord was upon their labors, and his strength confirmed their weakness, and secured the success that attended their labors; so that a great number believed Jesus to be the Messiah, and turned unto him with full purpose of heart; became his disciples, and kept his commandments.

22. *Came unto the ears]* When they heard. *They sent forth Barnabas]* This seems to have been the practice of the church in Jerusalem, where, at first, the apostles principally tarried, and where were congregated many of the first disciples. When they heard of a revival in any of the provinces around, they would collectively (for there was no one supreme head or director) commission one or more of their number to go to such a place to carry succor, and assist in spreading still more widely the knowledge of Christ in that vicinity. Thus Peter and John were sent down to Samaria when a good work had commenced under the labors of Philip, Acts viii, 14; and now Barnabas, a converted Grecian Jew, is sent down to confirm and assist in carrying on the work among the Grecians of Antioch.

23. *Had seen the grace of God]* "The favor and kindness of God" in its effects—the admission of the Gentiles to the benefits of the gospel. *That with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord]* With determination of heart, with a fixed and settled purpose of mind, they should remain with the Lord, hold fast the good profession they had made. As they had received the Lord, so they were to walk in him. Dr. Clarke remarks upon this passage:—"To be a Christian, is to be united to Christ, to be of one spirit with him; to continue to be a Christian is to continue in that union. It is absurd to talk of being children of God, and of absolute, final perseverance, when the soul has lost its spiritual union. There is no perseverance but in cleaving to the Lord: he who in his works denies him, does not

24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled them-

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*cleave* to him. Such a one is not of God; if he ever had the salvation of God, he has lost it; he is fallen from grace; nor is there a word in the book of God, fairly and honestly understood, that says such a person shall *absolutely* and *unavoidably arise* from his fall."

24. *For he was a good man]* This short, but comprehensive and most enviable description of this pious minister, may have been introduced here to show the secret of his success. It was not because he was a great, learned, or eloquent man, that he secured the addition of so many converts to the church, but because he was *good—full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith*. The appellation *good* expresses a combination of such amiable graces as integrity, pious simplicity, amiability, and gentleness. *Full of the Holy Ghost]* Richly endowed with divine influences, giving him wisdom and power, and securing the success of his word. *Faith]* In God, in the gospel, in the instrumentalities established for its progress, and in its sure success. What an eminent model for ministers and Christians who would be successful in doing good! *Was added unto the Lord]* Were converted, became disciples of Christ, and were, therefore, united to him by faith.

25. *Then departed Barnabas]* The work increasing upon his hands, he bethought himself of Saul, whom, to avoid persecution, the disciples had sent away to his native city. Acts ix, 30. Barnabas had become acquainted with him among the first, and formed for him a strong and sincere attachment. Acts ix, 27. He had discovered his eminent qualifications as a preacher and defender of the gospel; and he being now in the vicinity, Barnabas hastened to obtain his aid. *Tarsus]* The chief city of Cilicia, bordering upon Syria, and not very far distant from Antioch. Acts ix, 11.

26. *A whole year]* Because it was a large and important city. While they made rapid tours from town to town, through the different provinces, the apostles were accustomed to tarry longer in the important cities, as several remained principally in Jerusalem. Paul remained three years in Ephesus, (Acts xx, 31,) and a year and a half in Corinth, (Acts xviii, 11,) because in such places they had access to a large number, and these cities were centres of influence; strangers passing and repassing, drawn to such places by business, would receive the truths they heard, and carry them to the most distant countries. They were itinerants in the fullest sense of the word,

selves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signi-

moving continually, and in every direction, to give the word as wide a circle as their sanctified efforts could secure. *Assembled themselves with the church]* Came together for divine worship, the apostles leading the exercises. *And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch]* By whom this name was given to them, whether as a term of reproach, or simply to designate them as a religious sect, we cannot now tell. Commentators hold different and contradictory opinions. Some suppose Saul and Barnabas gave them this name; others, that it was bestowed by divine appointment; others, by Jews; and still others, by the Gentiles of Antioch. The latter seems to be the most probable opinion. If they had themselves assumed the name, or it had been of divine appointment, we should find the word oftener used in the remainder of this book and in the epistles: they speak of each other as disciples, brethren, &c. The Jews would not be likely to apply a name of the same meaning to them as to their Messiah, for this would be calling them the *followers of Messiah*, and thus tacitly allow that Jesus was the Messiah. They would rather apply the demeaning epithets Galileans or Nazarenes. Probably the Gentile inhabitants of Antioch originated the use of the term. They had been accustomed to call the follower of a distinguished teacher in religion or science by the title of the founder or teacher. Thus the Platonists and Pythagorians derived their appellations from Plato and Pythagoras. To distinguish the new sect, they called them, from the name of their founder, *Christians*. Blessed name! It probably was not intended to be a term of reproach, but of designation; although, as being the name of a reproached people, it came to be despised. It is the most honorable appellation, when it can be sincerely applied, in the world—no title can be compared with it. It will live and outlive every earthly name and honor, and be resplendent with divine beauty when the kingdoms of this world are no more.

27. *And in these days]* While Barnabas and Saul were in Antioch. *Came prophets]* The term prophets has a variety of significations in the New Testament; most generally it means preachers of the gospel, teachers, or exhorters, persons unordained who have a talent to instruct; but here it undoubtedly means persons endowed with the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, and who were granted a foresight of future events.

28. *Agabus]* This person is mentioned but once again in the sacred

fied by the Spirit, that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea.

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record, (Acts xxi, 10, 11,) where he foretells what will soon befall Paul. *And signified by the Spirit]* Announced, declared, under the influence of the divine Spirit. *That there should be great dearth]* A great famine. *Throughout all the world]* The word translated world is often used in a common and popular sense to distinguish the generalness of any event, or to distinguish the whole of a province from any portion. (See Luke xi, 1.) Thus it sometimes refers to the whole Roman empire; at other times it refers to all Palestine, but here, evidently, to the country of the Jews, for the disciples in Antioch take measures to relieve the wants of their Judean brethren, as if the famine would not extend to themselves, or the weight of it fall upon the land of Judea. *Which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar]* He was a Roman emperor, the fifth that had ruled the empire. He commenced his reign in the year of our Lord 41, and it closed in 54. History still preserves the record of four distinct famines which afflicted different portions of the Roman empire during his reign. The second, which occurred in the fourth year of his reign, and which was more particularly felt in Judea than in the other provinces, was probably the one foretold by Agabus, five or six years before. Of this famine, Josephus, the Jewish historian, makes mention. He describes it as "a very great famine, in which many died for want of food—that Helena, queen of Adiabene, who had embraced the Jewish religion, sent some of her servants to Alexandria to buy a great quantity of corn; and others of them to Cyprus to buy a cargo of dried figs, which she distributed to those who were in want."

29. *Every man according to his ability]* Charity and brotherly kindness are the first promptings of a converted heart; thus, when the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, the result was, the rich divided with the poor, and the wants of all were relieved. Acts iv, 34. The Christians in Jerusalem, that city not being a commercial city, or place of extensive business, or even surrounded by a fertile country, would be likely to be poor in their temporal circumstances, and could not endure, without great suffering, a famine; while Antioch was a city of great wealth and business. These Christians were most of them Gentiles, who owed a debt of gratitude to the Jews for their spiritual labors, while the Jewish Christians would be moved

30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

by strong natural, as well as fraternal motives, to contribute to the relief of their wants. The gifts were noble; they were *in proportion* to their wealth; each *just as much as he was able*. Did each Christian in the church of Christ thus graduate his amount of charity, none of the institutions that a divine Providence has called out and established for blessing the world would languish; but the missionary, Bible, tract, sabbath-school societies—all would flourish and extend their influences, until the whole earth should be covered with the knowledge and glory of the Saviour. How much suffering is there in the world that might easily be relieved if all who have the *ability* were willing to use it!

30. *And sent it to the elders]* This may refer simply to the officers of the church, who would hand it to the appointed deacons for distribution. Dr. Clarke says:—“These probably mean those who first believed on Christ crucified, either of the seventy disciples mentioned Luke, chap. x, or the one hundred and twenty mentioned chap. i, 15, or the seven deacons, chap. vi, 5.” It certainly is most probable that the latter attended to the distribution. It may be that the apostles, being now liable to leave Jerusalem, or most of them having left, they ordained elders or presbyters to administer the ordinances in the church, and to take charge of its discipline and temporalities.

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## CHAPTER XII.

11. Herod persecutes the church, kills James, and imprisons Peter, who is delivered by an angel in answer to the prayers of the church. 20. Herod visits Cesarea, and, in the pride of his heart, receives divine honors, and is struck by an angel with a miserable disease. 21. The word of God prospereth after his death.

NOW, about that time, Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church.

1. *Now, about that time]* About the time of the famine, or when Barnabas and Saul were in Antioch, about eleven years from the time of our Lord’s crucifixion, about 44 of the Christian era. *Herod the king]* His proper name was Agrippa; but when he became king, he took the name of Herod, which seems to have been considered in the Herodian family as a sort of title of sovereign distinction—like Cæsar to the Roman emperors; the one originated by Herod the Great, the other by Julius Cæsar. The father of the present Herod

was Aristobulus, a son of Herod the Great by the Jewish Mariamne, his favorite wife, whom, in a fit of jealousy, he caused to be put to death, and Aristobulus also suffered the same fate, together with his own brother Alexander; upon which, it was said, the Roman emperor remarked, "It were better to be Herod's hog than his son." The noted Herodias was one of the sisters of Agrippa, who became the wife of Herod Philip, and afterward of his brother Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee. Agrippa was born three years before the birth of Christ, and was two years old when his father was put to death. His grandfather, who had murdered his father, sent him to Rome to be brought up and educated with the children of the emperor. He obtained the good-will of the emperor Tiberias and his wife as he grew up: but having become attached to Caius Caligula, the grandson of Antonia, the wife of Tiberias, he once, while with him, was overheard to wish that the emperor Tiberias might soon die, in order that Caius might receive the empire. For this he was arrested: but just at this time Tiberias died, and Caius Caligula ascended the throne. Of course Agrippa was immediately released, and raised to high office and favor. His patron immediately presented him with a royal diadem, and constituted him king of Gaulonitis, Batanea, Tra-chonitis, and the tetrarchy of Lysanias; he also bestowed upon him a chain of gold equal in weight to the iron one by which he had been fastened to the soldier who held him in custody. He soon after received Galilee, his uncle Antipas being deposed from his government through the intrigues and ambition of his wife Herodias, whom he had wantonly taken from his brother Philip. Upon the death of Caligula, and the ascension of Claudius, Agrippa, having taken a large share in the elevation of the latter to the throne, was presented, in return for his efforts, with the government of Samaria, Judea, Aila of Lysanias, and a part of Libanus. Thus the entire kingdom of Herod the Great, which had been divided among three of his sons, Antipas, Archelaus, and Philip, had come again entire into the hands of his grandson Agrippa. Having Jewish blood in his veins, and having been educated in the religion of Moses, he is represented by Josephus as having been so zealous for the law as to permit scarcely a day to pass without a sacrifice. Being also descended, on the mother's side, from the greatly beloved Asmonean, or Maccabean princes, he was much esteemed by the Jews, and ruled for three years in a style of great magnificence, much to their satisfaction. Prompted by his own bigotry, and incited by the malignant priests and rulers that frequented his court, he would be likely to recommence the persecutions against the followers of Jesus, which, since the death of Saul, and during the civil convulsions in Palestine, had in a measure sub-

- 2 And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword.  
3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded fur-

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sided. *Stretched forth his hands]* A figurative expression, signifying that he took in hand, or set about, this persecution. *To vex certain of the church]* To injure, to persecute some of the more noted of the little company in Jerusalem.

2. *And he killed James—with the sword]* As a king, Herod had the power of life and death in his hands. “Under the rule of a native prince, we cease to read of crucifixions, and find such forms of capital punishment as the Jews were accustomed to employ. Slaying with the sword was accounted the most ignominious of the four forms of capital punishment which were in use among them.”—*Pic. Bible.* *The brother of John]* James is thus styled to distinguish him from another James, the son of Cleophas, called also Alpheus, who is styled the brother of our Lord, because his mother was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Matt. x, 3; Mark iii, 18; Luke vi, 15; John xix, 25; Acts i, 13. The latter James is styled the *Less*—the former, which is the one referred to here, was called the *Greater*, and was the son of Zebedee. James the *Less* was put to death by Ananias the high priest, in the reign of Nero. The mother of James the Greater and John had sought of the Saviour that they might sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his expected kingdom. Matt. xx, 23. Our Lord then prophesied of them: “Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.” This prediction was now fulfilled in the case of James, one of these sons. Thus was the number of the apostles diminished again; but we hear of no successors being chosen. “The apostles never had any *successors*: God has continued their *doctrine*, but not their *order*”—*CLARKE.*

3. *And because he saw it pleased the Jews]* Both the rulers and the people. He was prompted, in part, by his own sympathy with the Jewish religion; but the great moving principle was not so much a conscientious regard for the law, as to secure popular applause. Although of Jewish descent, still, as deriving his government from the Roman power, it would be likely to be offensive to the Jews. It was a prime object with him, therefore, to secure the favor of the nation; and in no way, at this time, could it have been better obtained than by persecuting the hated sect of Christians. He found his course succeeded, in the gratification produced by the death of James; and, like his grandfather, without the least compunction at the idea of shedding blood, when his own purposes could be furthered by it, he took measures to continue the work of death. *He proceeded further*

ther to take Peter also. Then were the days of unleavened bread.

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

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*to take Peter also]* His object was to secure the prominent leaders, hoping, by their removal, to disconcert the church, and throw them into confusion, like sheep without a shepherd, not knowing that they had one greater than Peter or James for a guide and defender, against whom no human arts could avail. *Then were the days of unleavened bread]* Just at this period, when Peter was arrested, the *passover* was being celebrated; during the seven days of the continuance of which the Jews were required to have no leaven in their houses, Exod. xii, 15-18; on which account it was called the feast of *unleavened bread*. It came on in the Jewish month corresponding to our April, from the fifteenth to the twenty-first day of the month. It was instituted to commemorate the passing of the angel of death over the dwellings of the Jews, while the first-born of the Egyptians were cut off. Exod. xii, 12, 13, 29, 30. They ate unleavened bread in memory of their hasty departure from Egypt not giving them time to prepare bread.

4. *He put him in prison]* To retain him until after the days of the feast had transpired, and then to put him to death; for though he had no scruple about shedding innocent blood, still he affects to be unwilling to break the solemnity of the passover with a public execution. *Four quaternions of soldiers to keep him]* A quaternion was a company of four; there were, then, sixteen soldiers, divided into four bands, four soldiers each to keep watch at a time, each company serving as a guard for three hours, and then being succeeded by another. Of the company on guard, two watched at the door of the prison, and two were in the prison with Peter. *Intending after Easter]* *After the passover*, for this is the exact meaning of the words, the present translation being, in the language of Dr. Clarke, "most unhappy, not to say absurd." The term Easter is used to denote a festival, observed by the English Episcopal Church, in memory of our Saviour's resurrection. As this festival transpired on the same month of the Jewish passover, some of the early translators, who were members of the English Church, in order to signify the season of the year in which the passover was celebrated, used this term. Easter, therefore, had no reference to the Jewish passover, and was not celebrated by early Christians, neither did it transpire exactly at the date of the passover. Indeed, the Christians seem to have in-

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

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tentionally avoided conformity with the Jews in this matter. The Jewish passover was always held on the fourteenth day of the first vernal full moon, but the Easter of the Christians not until the *next* sabbath after this full moon; and should the fourteenth day of the first vernal full moon happen to fall upon a sabbath, then the festival of Easter is deferred till the sabbath following. "The term," says Dr. Clarke, "is derived from the old Anglo-Saxon service books; it was first the name of a pagan festival that was celebrated in April, and afterward came to be applied to the Christian festival, celebrated nearly at the same time, in honor of the resurrection. In these service books, and in some of the very ancient English versions of the Gospels, this word is used to translate the term passover. Tyndal and Coverdale, following this custom, introduced the term into their edition of the Bible; and it has very improperly been permitted to remain in this place in all the successive English versions and editions." *To bring him forth to the people]* Undoubtedly for a public mock trial before the Sanhedrim, such as our Lord passed through, and for execution in the sight of all the people.

5. *But prayer was made without ceasing, &c.]* In every calamity that seemed to threaten the church, the early Christians betook themselves to prayer. The life of one of the most zealous of the apostles is now at stake; already James had fallen; Peter had been like a strong tower to the church in Jerusalem. He had made their public defenses before the Sanhedrim; and most successfully and powerfully proved Christ to be the Messiah in the heart of the city, and within the walls of the temple. His loss must be severely felt. They do not apply to the king or to the Jewish rulers for his rescue, for this would be hopeless; but they immediately supplicate a higher power, who is able to disappoint the malicious and murderous purposes of the mightiest earthly potentates—and their prayer is heard. The fervent, effectual prayer of the righteous availeth much. The term translated *without ceasing*, signifies also, "intense, fervent."

6. *When Herod would have brought him forth]* When the feast of unleavened bread had passed, and Herod was intending the next day to bring him forth for trial. *Between two soldiers, bound with two chains]* This was the Roman custom, excepting that additional and unnecessary severity was used in Peter's case; ordinarily, when

7 And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands.

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals: and so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

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prisoners were thus carefully guarded, they were secured with a single chain, one end of which was attached to the right hand of the prisoner, and the other to the left hand of the person who guarded him. In the present instance, the left hand of Peter was also attached by a chain to the right hand of another soldier, Peter being thus placed between them. *Was sleeping]* Although on the eve of a hopeless trial and a painful execution, and chained in a most uncomfortable situation. Such was the peace of his heart, his confidence in God, and the sustaining power of the Holy Ghost, that he drops into his usual slumber. What an astonishing power over death, and the natural shrinking from physical pain, does the gospel of Christ afford! The church were praying in agony; but the subject of their prayers was soundly sleeping, unconscious of fear, not less sweetly than Herod in his palace. *The keepers before the door]* The other two soldiers, who guarded the prison gate.

7. *And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him]* (See Acts v, 19.) Without doubt, a supernatural being—one of those ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation, who, in performing their mission, assume often a visible and human appearance. *Came upon him]* Stood near him, appeared before him. *And a light shined in the prison]* As light, or a luminous cloud, usually attended the presence of these heavenly visitants when they manifested themselves on the earth. Luke xi, 9; xxiv, 4. This shining light would assure Peter, upon waking from his sleep, of the character of the person thus unexpectedly present with him. *He smote Peter on the side]* Not severely, but with sufficient force to awaken him. *And his chains fell off]* Signifying the ease and quickness with which the divine power can overcome every obstacle. They were not wrenched off, but slipped from his hand as if broken or unlocked, without disturbing the guard, who had been thrown into a deep sleep, or who were overpowered by the presence of the angel. *With God nothing is impossible.*

8. *Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals]* Peter might have started up in haste, astonished by the singular occurrence. The angel, by this command, assures him of perfect security; that there was no necessity of undue haste. He is to make all the necessary prepara-

9 And he went out, and followed him, and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and *from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.*

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tion. He had, for comfort, thrown off the flowing robes that the orientals wear, and which are fastened to the body by a girdle, or it might have been his only bed. This the angel commands him to put on, as it would be needed when he left the prison. The sandals were wood or leather, covering the sole of the foot, and bound round with a strap. The mantle, or outside garment, was a large, square piece of cloth, thrown loosely over the shoulders.

9. *Wist not that it was true, &c.]* He knew not; so suddenly had it all transpired, that it still seemed almost a dream. *Thought he saw a vision]* That is, thought he might be in a trance or dream, and that these events *seemed* to him to occur, but did not in reality.

10. *When they were past the first and the second ward]* The word translated *ward*, also means guard; they passed the two guards, consisting of two each: the inner, to whom Peter was bound; and the outer, standing before the gate. *The iron gate—which opened to them of his own accord]* The outer gate—a massive, iron-fastened door, also probably guarded. This, without a human hand, opened spontaneously as they approached, giving a most convincing evidence of miraculous energy. *That leadeth unto the city]* Jerusalem was surrounded by three walls, and this prison is supposed to have been in one of the towers of the innermost walls; and the iron gate is supposed to have been the entrance to this tower. *And forthwith the angel departed from him]* When no longer miraculous agency was necessary, it immediately ceased; now Peter could find security by human means.

11. *And when Peter was come to himself]* Until this moment he had seemed to himself more asleep than awake; and he stood, as the angel left, in silent amazement at what had occurred. Being now left alone, in the open air, he recovers his self-possession, and attributes his wonderful deliverance, with a grateful heart, to the true source. *Of a surely]* Truly. *All the expectation—of the Jews]* They

12 And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together, praying.

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

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fully expected, as well as earnestly desired, to witness the execution of this noted and courageous apostle of our Lord, with something of the same appetite with which they cried out for the blood of his Master.

12. *When he had considered the thing*] When he had reflected upon what was the best course for him to pursue under the circumstances. *Came to the house of Mary*] Where, very probably, Peter abode while in the city, and where he thought his friends might be gathered. He determined to go thither at once to relieve their anxieties. *Mother of John*] Probably this was the John Mark who wrote the Gospel bearing his name, the companion of Saul and Barnabas in their tour through Asia Minor. Acts xiii, 5, 13; xv, 39. John was the Hebrew, and Mark his Greek surname, it being common thus to affix two names. *Where many were gathered together, praying*] There were no churches then, and they held their meeting in private houses. As on the morrow Peter was to be brought forth, they dedicated the night to intense prayer, not even yet despairing of success with an all-powerful Saviour. How soon and how extraordinarily is the prayer answered!

13. *As Peter knocked at the door of the gate*] He rapped at the porch door, or outer gate, as opposed to the inner door, which led immediately to the court around which the apartments were built. The gates were large, to admit animals and burdens; and a smaller door was constructed in them for the convenience of foot passengers. *A damsel came to hearken*] A maid-servant, or simply a girl connected with the family. She came to hearken. Through fear of the Jews they were forced to use much precaution; and this hour of the night more care than usual would be likely to be used. *Rhoda*] The name is a Greek word, signifying *rose*; it being common among the Jews to give their daughters the names of flowers, &c.—as, for instance, Susanna, a lily; Tamor, a palm-tree. (See Grotius.)

14. *When she knew Peter's voice*] For she had undoubtedly often heard him speak, and she now, at once, recognizes his well-known accents. *She opened not the gate for gladness*] How natural this thoughtlessness! She was so overwhelmed with pleasure at the

15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.

16 But Peter continued knocking. And when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go, show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

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fact of his escape, and is so anxious to give the intelligence of it, that she forgets to open the gate, and that he is still standing in the street excluded from the house.

15. *Thou art mad*] Beside thyself; a common expression used in reference to those who assert what appears to be an impossibility. Although they had been earnestly praying for this, the answer was so sudden, miraculous, and incredible, they could scarcely believe it. *She constantly affirmed*] Positively asserted. *It is his angel*] The Jews believed that each person, or, at least, every good person, had a guardian angel appointed to watch particularly over him. When angels appeared to men they assumed the human form, and they therefore believed that these angels did sometimes assume the very forms, and impersonate those over whom they watched, when they had something of especial importance to convey concerning them, to their friends, as the fact of their danger or death. Now it seemed to them impossible that Peter could have escaped from the prison; and immediately the opinion, in which they had been educated, came to their minds as affording the only explanation of the circumstances—it must be his guardian spirit which has appeared in the exact form of Peter, and speaks in the same voice he is accustomed to use. They may have suspected he brought some intelligence of the approaching death of the apostle, or that he came to tell them that he had already died, or was put to death, within the prison walls.

16. *Were astonished*] Being now convinced that it was really Peter, and not a spirit.

17. *Beckoning unto them, &c.*] Waving his hand, significant of a desire for silence, lest their clamorous joy might attract observation, as well as immediately to call their attention to the great work of God, who should receive all the praise. *Go, show these things unto James, and to the brethren*] Who undoubtedly were also praying and greatly interested in the matter of his release. The James mentioned here is James the Less, the other having been recently put to death by Herod. Verse 2. The Christians were collected together in different

18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Cesarea, and *there abode*.

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places to watch and pray. Peter desires to have their anxieties relieved; to let them know that God has heard prayer, and to secure their thanksgivings to the Almighty. *He departed, and went into another place]* He left the city; but where he went is not stated. It was necessary that he should leave the city, as he had reason to expect that every effort would be made to discover him. He had been miraculously relieved from prison, and he well judged that it was the divine will that he should use measures to save himself from another arrest at this time: Some have supposed he went to Cesarea; others, with more probability, to Antioch. (See Gal. ii, 11.) But the Papists insist that he went to Rome, where he, as they say, established a church, and became its first bishop. We need not say that they have not the least Scriptural evidence by which to sustain this opinion.

18. *There was no small stir among the soldiers]* They were thrown into consternation, and made anxious inquiries among each other concerning the astonishing absence of the prisoner. They probably examined the precincts of the prison; found everything in its usual order—the gates were closed and barred; yet still the fact was not to be questioned, Peter was gone.

19. *He examined the keepers, &c.]* After examining the keepers, &c. The keepers, probably, that had the especial charge of him at the prison during the watch in which he was found missing, are intended. These he closely interrogated, and finding they could give no account of the matter, he affects to believe they had slept at their post, and permitted the prisoner to escape. The penalty for such an act, on the part of a Roman sentinel, was death, or the same punishment that the culprit was to suffer; and though, undoubtedly, they insisted upon their innocence, yet the king, disappointed and enraged at the escape of his victim, and in no way averse to shedding blood, commanded that they should be put to death. *He went down from Judea to Cesarea]* The latter city was now fast rising into importance and wealth, and was the chief residence of the Roman governors. Josephus describes this journey, and states the cause to have been, that he might preside over the solemnities and games which were celebrated in that city every Olympiad, a period of about four years,

20 And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon. But they came with one accord to him, and having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace, because their country was nourished by the king's *country*.

21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

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in honor of Cæsar, whose name this city bore. Great numbers of persons of rank and distinction resorted to Cesarea on these occasions.

20. *Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon]* He was greatly incensed and enraged against the inhabitants of these two commercial cities of Phœnix, north of Cesarea. The reason of this is not given, but it is conjectured that it was caused by commercial rivalry. Herod the Great had spent immense sums of money upon the port of Cesarea, and his successors probably forwarded his designs, and lavished money upon its harbor, making it a most admirable and commodious port and commercial city. There may have been some rivalry between this port and the older seaports, Tyre and Sidon. However, this is all conjecture; this fact only is known, they had incurred the royal displeasure. *They came with one accord to him]* That is, the Tyrians and Sidonians, conjointly, came to him in the persons of their ambassadors, taking the opportunity, when he was at Cesarea, nearer to Phœnix than Jerusalem. *The king's chamberlain]* The officer having charge of the king's bed-chamber; an honorable office, and usually filled by one in high esteem with the king. Blastus thus enjoying favorable opportunities of making such representations as were necessary, they secure his interest in their business, and make him their advocate. *Desired peace]* Desired reconciliation, the removal of the difficulty; not that war was really existing, but there was a painful misunderstanding that might result in his stopping their supplies of food. *Because their country was nourished by the king's country]* The inhabitants of these cities being almost entirely devoted to commerce, paid little attention to agriculture, and were thus almost entirely dependent upon the neighboring agricultural districts for grain. Of this, the rich hills and valleys of Galilee and the neighboring provinces, all belonging to Herod, supplied the greater part, as they did in Solomon's days. 1 Kings v, 11. These cities were, therefore, quite dependent for food upon the king's territory; and prohibition of trade with them laid upon his dominion, would be no small grievance to them; they had every reason, therefore, to desire peace.

21. *And upon a set day]* Upon an appointed day of audience, perhaps when the ambassadors alluded to were to be publicly received

22 And the people gave a shout, *saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.*

23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because

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It appears from Josephus, who strikingly corroborates the Scripture narrative in his history, to have been the second day of the games, The ceremonial took place in the theatre, where his throne was set. *Arrayed in royal apparel]* In garments of unusual magnificence—in his kingly robes of purple, adorned with gold and precious stones. *Made an oration]* Probably to the ambassadors, to whom he now gave audience in the presence of the multitude, and made a speech to them.

22. *And the people gave a shout]* Loud applause. The multitude, composed of the inhabitants of the city and foreigners, chiefly, not Gentiles and Jews, for the Jews would not have ascribed divine honor to any man. They were probably incited by the courtiers and favorites of the king to give this extravagant expression of their foolish and idolatrous adulations. *It is the voice of a god]* This term, the Greeks and Romans were wont to apply to their great and noble men after death, and sometimes, as in this case, before their decease. It was in this qualified, but still idolatrous and blasphemous, sense, that it was used at this time. It fell as sweet music upon the ear of this proud and inflated monarch; and he was far from wishing to prohibit it, or to restrain the multitude, though his Jewish education had taught him its blasphemy.

23. *The angel of the Lord smote him]* The disease was evidently a direct judgment from the hand of God. It was not the result of sickness, but a sudden, peculiar, and awful stroke, caused by the direct interposition of divine Providence. An angel had been sent to rescue Peter, the servant of God, and is now sent to punish his persecutor. *He gave not God the glory]* He permitted honors to be paid to himself that could only properly be offered, and that rightly belonged, to God. *And he was eaten of worms]* A horrid, inflammatory disease in his bowels, breeding worms, and most excreting in its torments, was made the instrument of his death. Its loathsomeness, its directness, and strangeness, were all adapted to produce a deep and wholesome impression upon the minds of those present engaged in paying idolatrous honor to a man like to themselves. His glory was at once destroyed; his beauty defaced; his strength made weakness; and the vile worm, even before death, commenced preying upon his corrupting body; all ending in a death painful beyond description. “Whoever exalteth himself shall be abased.” Matt. xxiii, 12. The account that Josephus gives, entirely corroborates the account of

he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

St. Luke; he has embellished and added to his recital certain puerile reports, and connected with it the common superstitions of his nation, but in the main particulars there is a perfect coincidence:—“ When Agrippa (Herod) had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city of Césarea, which was formerly called Strato’s Tower; and there he exhibited shows in honor of Cæsar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated to make vows for his safety. At which festival a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity through his province. On the second day of which show, he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment, being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun’s rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him; and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another, (though not for his good,) that ‘ he was a god;’ and they added, ‘ Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto reverenced thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.’ Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But as he presently afterward looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, ‘ I, whom ye call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept of what Providence allots, as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner.’ When he had said this, his pain became violent. Accordingly, he was carried into the palace, and the rumor went abroad everywhere, that he would certainly die in a little time. But the multitude presently sat in sackcloth, with their wives and children, after the law of their country, and besought God for the king’s recovery. All places were also full of mourning and lamentation. Now the king rested in a high chamber, and as he saw them below lying prostrate on the ground, he could not himself forbear weeping.

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their ministry*, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

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And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and in the seventh year of his reign."—*Jos. Antiq. Jews*, book xix, chap. viii, § 2. Upon this, Kitto well remarks:—"The omission of this absurd incident of the owl, by which Josephus manages to make a very sad narrative ludicrous, is certainly not a circumstance which detracts from the superior authority of Luke as an historian. There is no real difference between them as to the malady of which he died. Josephus does not mention the disease, but merely the effect, agonizing pains in the bowels; but Luke, who was a physician, goes higher, giving the cause of those pains—'he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.'" (See Pictorial Bible, *in loc.*) The fact of Herod's being popular among the Jews, and of Jewish descent, will account for the palliating manner in which he is presented in the above description by the Jewish historian.

24. *But the word of God grew and multiplied]* In spite of all opposition and persecution the gospel spread in every direction, and the number of its converts was greatly multiplied. The king, their great persecutor, was thus awfully stopped in his career of opposition, and Peter was miraculously set free to preach—all this would greatly conduce to the production of a strong, favorable impression in favor of the truth and divine authority of the gospel. Thus the Lord makes the wrath of man to praise him. Psa. lxxvi, 10.

25. *And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem]* Whither they had been to carry the offering from the Christians of Antioch to the poor disciples in Jerusalem. Acts xi, 29, 30. *Fulfilled their ministry]* Having performed this service, and accomplished the object of their journey. *John, whose surname was Mark]* (See note on verse 12.)

## CHAPTER XIII.

1. Paul and Barnabas sent by the church, being commissioned by the Holy Ghost, upon an extensive missionary tour. 5. Preach in the Island of Cyprus. 6. They meet and rebuke Elymas, the sorcerer, at Paphos, who is struck with blindness. 12. Sergius Paulus, the deputy, is converted. 14. Paul preaches in Antioch. 45. Opposition of the Jews. 46. They turn to the Gentiles, many of whom believe. 50. The apostles, expelled from Antioch, come to Iconium.

NOW there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

1. *In the church that was at Antioch]* Antioch had become a second Jerusalem to the early Christians. Driven from the holy city by persecution, many of them found a home in Antioch, and preaching the gospel to the Jews at first, many of them were converted: after this, under the labors of Paul and Barnabas, a large number of Jews and Gentiles were added to the church. And now, as Jerusalem had before this sent forth laborers in different directions, so the missionary church at Antioch was blessed with a sufficient number of ministers to enable them to send forth into the surrounding provinces those who could preach the everlasting gospel to those who had not yet heard the glad tidings. *Certain prophets and teachers]* Some of whom had come from Jerusalem, and some were natives of Antioch. "The precise distinction between these two classes of ministers is not obvious; and probably, in this passage, a precise distinction was not meant to be observed. The *prophets*, among the early Christians, appear, in general, to have been those who foretold future events under divine inspiration, and who, in their religious instructions and exhortations, were under a peculiar divine influence. The *teachers* were probably, when spoken of distinctively, those not endued with a spirit of prophecy, but who were able to instruct in religion, to unfold and vindicate the principles of the Christian dispensation. The words seem, however, to be here used in a general sense, as meaning preachers of the gospel."—RIPLEY. *Simeon that was called Niger]* Of whom we know nothing more than his name. Niger is a Latin word signifying *black*: whether it was given him from the color of his skin or hair, or why he bore it, we know not. *Lucius of Cyrene]* The same supposed to be mentioned in Rom. xvi, 21; a native of Cyrene in Africa. (See Acts xi, 20.) *Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch]* This was Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, and not Herod Agrippa, mentioned in the preceding chapter. The word

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

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translated *brought up* signifies, 1. A *foster brother*: so the Ethiopic version renders this, "the son of Herod's nurse." 2. *One who takes food with another*. 3. *One who is educated with another—a school-fellow*; and this is probably the meaning here. "There is an account in Josephus, of one Manaen," says Dr. Briseoe, as quoted by Townsend, "an Essene, who foretold concerning Herod the Great, that he should be a king, while he was yet a boy at school; and when it actually came to pass that he was king, being sent for by Herod, and asked how long he should reign, whether ten years? he answered, Yes. Twenty years? Yes, thirty years. Upon which Herod gave him his right hand; and from that time held in great esteem such as were of the sect of the Essenes." "It is very probable," says Townsend, "that a son of this Manaen, or some nephew, or other kinsman, to whom he gave his name, was educated in the family of Herod the Great. The young Manaen might be of the same age, and have the same preceptors and tutors as had Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great, and for that reason be said to be brought up with him in particular. This Herod Antipas was, after his father's death, tetrarch of Galilee, and is the person who put John the Baptist to death."

2. *As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted*] As they were engaged in public religious services. While thus engaged, as it was an occasion of great solemnity, fasting was added to their other exercises. Very probably they were seeking direction in prayer from on high concerning the further spread of the gospel, and a blessing upon their labors. What immediately followed may be considered an answer to their prayer. *The Holy Ghost said*] Signified by direct revelation to some one of the brethren present. Here the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit are evidently implied. *Separate me Barnabas and Saul*] The word means, to *separate*, to *destine*, to *appoint*; which is the signification here. *Separate unto me, &c.*, is the force of the original expression. *Whereunto I have called them*] They received their call, not from the church, but previously had been chosen by the Holy Ghost expressly for this work. Still, they wrought in connection with the church, according to the will of the divine Spirit.

3. *And when they had fasted and prayed*] They were thus engaged

4 So they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

when the divine Spirit signified this will; and probably another day was appointed to be devoted to this solemn office. This day they spent also in fasting and prayer, and proceeded to the simple, but impressive ceremony of setting them apart for their office and ministry. *And laid their hands on them]* That is, the persons mentioned in the first verse of this chapter. There is no command recorded in Scripture that they should thus ordain them for their mission, neither was it a Jewish custom thus to ordain the elders of the synagogues; but, on the contrary, the imposition of hands among the Jews was forbidden: but these prophets and teachers undoubtedly were conscious of meeting the will of the Spirit, in some manner expressed to them, by this act. Here, then, is the simple, beautiful, apostolic practice of setting apart holy men for their work. The men were evidently called of God; a day was set apart for their public recognition; all the church joined in solemn prayer and fasting, and then the prophets and ministers proceeded to lay hands upon their heads, and to rehearse their commission.

4. *Being sent forth by the Holy Ghost]* In the last clause of the preceding verse it is said, "They (the church) sent them away." There is no contradiction. They were sent forth by the express direction of the Holy Spirit, and were guided and supported in their journeys by the continued presence and gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. *Seleucia]* It was a seaport, situated at the mouth of the river Orontes, upon which, about fifteen miles distant, Antioch was also situated. It received its name from Seleucus Nicanor, one of the generals of Alexander, who, upon the death of this king, received Syria as his portion of the empire, which was divided among Alexander's generals. Seleucia became a city of great importance and wealth. *Cyprus]* This was a large island in the Mediterranean, two hundred miles in length, fifty in breadth, and about one hundred miles distant from the coast of Syria. Barnabas, being a native of this island, would feel an especial interest in its spiritual welfare; and probably on this account they turn their feet first in this direction. "This beautiful island," says Kitto, "was eminently fertile in all kinds of productions suited to its climate; and its wines were held in very high estimation. It has always been noted for its redundant production of corn, with which it was enabled to supply other countries. At present, Cyprus exhibits but the ruin of its former glory and beauty. The spontaneous fertility of its soil cannot be suppressed even by desolation and neglect; its olives, oranges, and vines, still

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had also John to *their minister*.

6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus:

7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus,

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grow combined even with the sugar-cane: but now not more than thirty thousand are found in this large and rich island, which once sustained a population of two millions."

5. *Salamis*] The most important city of Cyprus. It is a seaport, situated on the south-eastern part of the island. *In the synagogues of the Jews*] Paul and Barnabas both being Jews, could have access to the synagogues. It seems to have been their custom, where there were Jews, to make the first offer of salvation to them. *And they had also John to their minister*] John Mark. Acts xii, 25. He was the attendant, companion, and assistant, of Paul and Barnabas, taking charge of all necessary temporal duties, that they might give themselves up solely to the work of the ministry.

6. *Paphos*] This was the next city in importance to Salamis, and was at this time the residence of the Roman proconsul. It was situated on the western coast, so that passing from Salamis, on the east, (as the island extended from east to west,) to Paphos, one would travel through the island. The city was noted for its temple to Venus, and the impure rites instituted in honor of this heathen goddess of love. *A certain sorcerer, a false prophet*] In the original, a *magician*, one who practiced magical arts—claimed to foretell future events by a supernatural inspiration—a fortune-teller. *Bar-jesus*] The term *bar* in the original language signified *son*. He was, therefore, the *son of Jesus*, or *Joshua*, a name not uncommon among the Jews.

7. *The deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus*] The original word used to describe the office of Sergius, is properly translated *proconsul*; and it has been objected to by infidels as a mistake, as the governor of Cyprus did not bear so honorable a title, and serves, in their estimation, to discredit Luke's claims to belief as an historian; but the consideration of the objection only serves to confirm the peculiar accuracy of the Scripture statement: for not only has a quotation been found in an ancient historian, Dion Cassius, in which this very title is given to the governor of Cyprus, but a Cyprian medal, or coin, has been found, struck in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, the very period that Sergius Paulus was in that island, and in whose reign Paul visited Cyprus; and this medal bears the name of Proclus, who succeeded Sergius, and he receives, on the coin, the exact title

a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withheld them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

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here given by Luke to Sergius—*proconsul of Cyprus*. *A prudent man*] A man of ability. He was probably well educated for the times. He might have been learning something of philosophy and natural religion, if not of the Jewish religion, from the Jew Elymas, and he was thus prepared to hear with some interest the discourses of the apostles. *Who called for Barnabas and Saul*] Of whose preaching he had perhaps heard in different parts of the island, and whose presence in Paphos was known to him. He desired to hear for himself the new religion they preached, probably to gratify curiosity, being of an inquiring mind, rather than from any conviction of his need of the gospel or from any particular interest in it.

8. *But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name,) &c.*] Elymas is an Arabic word, of which the Greek word magus, which we translate sorcerer, is its meaning as near as it could be expressed in another language. The Arabic word signifies *wise, learned, or magician*; and is applied in either a good or a bad sense, to signify an intelligent, “wise man;” or, in a popular sense, one who pretends to discern the future by magical arts—a fortune-teller. Of the same nature is the word “wizard,” (wise-ard,) having the same equivocal meaning. He probably had become acquainted with the sciences of the day, and by this means imposed upon the vulgar—somewhat similar to Simon of Samaria. Acts viii, 9. *Seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith*] The force of the original is, *to pervert*, or turn from the faith by misrepresenting it. Seeing that the exposition of the gospel by the apostles was finding a ready ear, and a candid reception on the part of the deputy, Elymas began to fear for himself and his hold upon the mind of this officer; he therefore began to prejudice, if possible, his mind against the doctrine he was hearing, to prevent his embracing the faith.

9. *Then Saul, who also is called Paul*] And ever after by Luke; and when speaking of himself, or referred to by other apostles, he is thus styled. Why his name was now changed, or the present one assumed, is not certainly known; but has been a matter of many conjectures among commentators. Paul, in the Latin tongue, signifies small, weak, and may have been given him at his birth from his

10 And said, O full of all subtily, and all mischief, *thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness*, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord ?

small size: thus he says of himself, 2 Cor. x, 10: "For his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." As the name occurs just here, it is thought by some that he took the Latin name of Paul out of deference to the proconsul, his first illustrious convert. But in this we should discover nothing of the apostle's usual character; and, besides, Luke gives him this name *before* the conversion of the proconsul is noticed. We incline to think, that being a native of Asia Minor, he always had two names, one among the Jews, and the other among the Gentiles. That Saul was his Jewish name, we know; and that Paul was his other name, is probable, because any Greek name he might have borne would have passed well enough among the Romans without the necessity of his taking a third Latin name. That his original Gentile name was the Roman one of Paul, is also the more probable from his being born a Roman citizen, which privilege was likely to be indicated by his bearing a Roman name. The reasons for his now *resuming* it would be the same as those which would have led him to *assume* it, had it not been previously borne by him; and they are thus stated in supposition by Doddridge:—"I think Beza's account of the matter most easy and probable—that having conversed hitherto chiefly with Jews and Syrians, to whom Saul was familiar, and now coming among Romans and Greeks, they would naturally pronounce his name Paul; as one whose Hebrew name was Jochanan, would be called by the Greeks and Latins Johannes; by the French, Jean; by the Dutch, Hans; and by the English, John. Beza thinks the family of the proconsul might be the first who addressed or spoke to him by the name of Paul. This conjecture of Beza's is exceedingly probable. It is clear, however, that the reasons here stated must, according to the views we have taken, equally have operated in procuring the name Paul *before* he left his native Tarsus, that city being chiefly inhabited by Greeks." *Filled with the Holy Ghost]* Under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit; so that the scorching condemnation he pronounced against Elymas was not his own, but the immediate direction of the Spirit, who understood the real character of Elymas. *Set his eyes on him]* Looked intently at him.

10. *Full of all subtily, and all mischief]* Deceit and knavery, trickery; the word here translated mischief, denotes *facility of action, levity, villainy*, and has reference to his arts of imposition, his legerdemain, &c. *Thou child of the devil]* Under his influence; practicing devilish

11 And now behold, the hand of the Lord *is* upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they

arts; like him, a deceiver and a liar. So our Lord calls the Jews, on account of their hypocrisies, their perversions of his doctrine, and deceptions, the children of the devil, (John viii, 44,) because they resembled him in opposing the truth; his works they did. *Thou enemy of all righteousness]* Opposed to all truth, because his very livelihood depended upon deceit and fraud. The truth must destroy at once his influence and means of support. A man who lives by fraud, exaction, or deceit, will always be an enemy to righteousness, loving darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil. *Wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?*] “And to misrepresent the upright counsels and purposes of the Lord (for the salvation of men?)” The ways of the Lord, the doctrines of the gospel, are plain and straight; Elymas’s ways were crooked, perverse, and perplexed. He exhorts him to cease to turn the minds of men from divine truth, which, as a Jew, he must have understood sufficiently to condemn his present course.

11. *Behold]* Take notice. *The hand of the Lord is upon thee]* A Hebrew phrase denoting impending judgment. “A divine judgment now falls upon thee.” God is about to afflict thee. An almighty Hand hinders thy further progress in these deceptions, by closing thine eyes. *Thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season]* That is, thy blindness shall be total, as some can barely distinguish the rays of the sun, though otherwise blind—stone blind, as we say. *It was for a season;* how long is not specified; perhaps until he truly repented of his former sins. *Immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness]* Blindness commenced at once, but increased gradually; first came a cloudy mist, in which things were indistinctly seen, then the total eclipse. *Went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand]* So complete was the miracle. He could not guide himself; but, perfectly helpless, he sought some one to lead him.

12. *Believed]* The doctrine of Paul, attested by such an unquestionable miracle. *Being astonished]* Amazed at this miraculous confirmation of the gospel; the phrase, *doctrine of the Lord*, referring to his manner or mode of presenting or teaching his faith—namely, by *miracles.*

13. *Paul and his company]* Barnabas, John Mark, and perhaps

came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and sat down.

15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the

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some of the converts of Cyprus, accompanied them. *Loosed from Paphos*] Set sail. *Came to Perga in Pamphylia*] Pamphylia was a province of Asia Minor, opposite the western extremity of Cyprus, where Paul embarked. It occupied a central portion of the southern coast of Asia Minor, having, on the east, Paul's native province of Cilicia, and Lycia on the west. Perga was the chief town of this province, and was noted anciently for a famous temple dedicated to Diana. It was situated some distance from the seacoast on the river Cestrus. *John departing from them, returned to Jerusalem*] Why John Mark left at this time is not stated. It may be the labors of the journeys were considered as too severe for him to bear, or the danger too great, or his desire to return home may have become irresistible. From whatever cause he left, the reasons did not satisfy Paul, as it appears from Acts xv, 38, where he expresses his unwillingness to take him again on a preaching tour. He was afterward restored to his confidence, and received his warmest affection. Col. iv, 10; Philemon 24; 2 Tim. iv, 11.

14. *They came to Antioch in Pisidia*] This province lay immediately north of Pamphylia. Antioch, which was actually in the province of Phrygia, was its capital, and was called Antioch in Pisidia to distinguish it from Antioch in Syria, on the Orontes, from whence the apostle had come, and fifteen other places of the same name within the limits of Syria. *Went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day*] Whenever a sufficient company of Jews in a foreign land were collected, a synagogue was constructed, that they might engage in the reading and exposition of the Jewish Scriptures, though deprived of the temple services. These, as we have before stated, were never overlooked by the apostles; but though especially the apostle of the Gentiles, yet Paul improves every opportunity to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to preach the gospel to those who were the children of the covenant after the flesh. This was on Saturday, or the seventh day—the Jewish sabbath. *Sat down*] Took their seats, no doubt in the place where the doctors or teachers usually sat, as was the practice of those who were used to teach or preach.

15. *And after the reading of the law and the prophets*] A portion selected from the law, and another from the prophets, which was the

rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, *Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.*

16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

custom among the Jews. The law, or the five books of Moses, were divided into sections of such length that by reading one every sabbath the whole of the books of the law would be read through every year. *The rulers of the synagogue sent unto them]* These rulers were men of age and repute in the Jewish community, to whom was committed the general care and direction of the synagogue, and who saw that the exercises were properly performed. They selected the readers of the appointed Scriptures, and also some person to explain and enforce the truths read, or to address the people at the close of the reading. They also exercised the office of judges in minor offenses. One of their number bore the title of chief ruler of the synagogue. Seeing these Jewish brethren—Paul and Barnabas—present, they send word to them by the servant of the synagogue, that they could have an opportunity, if they desired it, to speak to the people. *If ye have any word, &c.]* The meaning of the original is: “If either of you have any word (of exhortation) to address to the people, speak it, this being the proper time.” These addresses were usually founded upon the Scriptures read just before. “Being strangers,” says the editor of the Pictorial Bible, “they were not asked to read, as our Saviour did in the synagogue of Nazareth. It was not usual for any one to read in a synagogue of which he was not a member; and hence, although our Saviour taught in many synagogues, it does not appear that he ever read in any but that to which he belonged. The ‘word of exhortation’ or sermon, must not be confounded with such an exposition of Scripture as our Lord declared on the occasion to which we have referred. It was a distinct matter after the regular service had been finished. There was then almost always a discourse delivered by some competent person. There was no regular officer for the purpose; but any properly qualified teacher, who happened to be present, was asked, or offered himself, to address the congregation. As the Jews residing in foreign parts had less abundant opportunities of obtaining instruction in this way than those in Judea, they were probably all the more anxious to avail themselves of such opportunities as offered of hearing such strangers as visited their synagogues. This will explain the character of the present application”

16. *Then Paul—said]* Of this address to his own brethren after

17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought he them out of it.

18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

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the flesh, Townsend remarks in his Notes:—"Nothing can be added to the arguments which the apostles have addressed in their reported sermons, and their invaluable epistles, to their beloved countrymen; and their doctrines seem to be all comprised in this address of St. Paul. He reminds them of the former mercies of God to the family of Abraham, and the prediction that their Messiah should be descended from David; and asserts that this Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth. He appeals to the well-known fact of the resurrection of Christ from the dead as the principal evidence of the truth of his declaration, and concludes with enforcing that one important truth, in which the whole human race are so immediately interested, that forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed through Him alone; and that Christ alone can justify the Christian, not only from those offenses from which they were typically purified by the ceremonial law, but from those sins also for which that law had made no provision." *Men of Israel, and ye that fear God]* Two classes are here addressed, both classes being present—the native Jew and the Jewish proselyte. There were two kinds of the latter class, as we have before observed, those who received the law, and were circumcised, and those who renounced idolatry, and embraced the Jewish religion, but did not submit to circumcision. *Give audience]* Hear.

17. *Chose our fathers]* Selected our forefathers—Abraham, Isaac, &c., the patriarchs—to be objects of his especial regard, the founders of a peculiar race, and the depositaries of his gracious promises—keeping them distinct from all other nations. *Exalted the people]* When oppressed in the land of Egypt, God raised them in the respect and fear of their enemies by their astonishing increase, and by his notable miracles in their behalf—or, as Doddridge renders it, "he raised them out of a calamitous state." *With a high arm]* By the exertion of mighty power. "A literal translation of the Hebrew phrase *bézeroá ramah*, with a lifted up arm, to protect them, and destroy their enemies. The meaning of the phrase is, *a manifest display of the divine power.*"—CLARKE.

18. *About the time of forty years]* That is, from the time of their going out of Egypt until they reached Canaan. *Suffered he their manners]* Endured their perverseness and frequent disobedience—was long-suffering toward them. The reading of several of the best

19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

20 And after that he gave *unto them* judges, about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

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editions of the New Testament here is probably the correct one: "He carried them in his arms, in the wilderness, as a nurse;" the apostle having reference, perhaps, to the passage in Deut. i, 31, "Thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place." The meaning of the passage is, that his dealings toward them were marked with the tenderness of a nurse for her infant child; he bore them, as it were, in his bosom, over the difficulties of the way.

19. *When he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan]* That is, when he had destroyed them as nations, *subdued, humbled*, and brought them into subjection, not exterminated them. These nations were the Hittites, Canaanites, Girgashites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and the Jebusites. *He divided their land by lot]* Thus had Joshua done under the direction of the Almighty. (See Joshua xi, 23; xii, 6-8.)

20. *He gave unto them judges]* From the death of Joshua to the choice of Saul as king, men were raised up in the providence of God, not in a regular line of descent, who were made the instruments of relieving them from the oppressions into which they had fallen, and who exercised the chief authority in the tribes, bearing the title of judges, from one of their most important offices. *About the space of four hundred and fifty years]* This is a passage of no small difficulty with commentators, because its chronology conflicts with that of 1 Kings vi, which reads thus: "And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord." Taking away from this forty years for the wandering in the wilderness, and then the reign of David and Saul forty years each, there will be then but four hundred years left between their coming into Canaan and the reign of Saul. The Jewish historian, Josephus, agrees with the apostle in his chronology of the event, and differs from that of 1 Kings, in that he makes the period there mentioned from the departure out of Egypt to the building of the temple to be five hundred and ninety-two years. If from this sum the forty years in the wilderness be subtracted, seventeen for Joshua, eighty for Saul and David, four for the reign of

21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and

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Solomon, until the building of the temple, there remain four hundred and fifty-one years for the judges, the time specified by the apostle. From this it appears that the reckoning of Josephus was the commonly received chronology of events, and the apostle uses it as best known to his hearers, the length of the period not being important, and only incidentally introduced.

Admitting that there is a disagreement in dates, it is a matter of small importance, and easily accounted for: numbers being anciently signified by letters, a little variation in the copying of succeeding manuscripts would materially alter the original amount; but the probability is that there is no discrepancy here, and that the difference arises from the different dates from which the two series commence. The passages have been reconciled by taking the meaning of the words in the passage in Acts to be, "And after these things, which lasted about the space of four hundred and fifty years, he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet," that is, from the time that God chose the fathers (which some fix to the birth of Isaae) to the time the land was divided to them by lot, was nearly four hundred and fifty years, and then God appointed judges in Israel. "Or we may suppose," says Bloomfield, "that in *this* number are reckoned the years of the reigns of the tyrants who occasionally held Israel in subjection during the dynasty of the judges; and which, when added, make up exactly four hundred and fifty. Thus no error will attach to either passage, and only different modes of computation be supposed to be adopted."

21. *Saul the son of Cis]* The same as Kish of the Old Testament, and which would have been the most proper translation of the name here. 1 Sam. ix, x. *By the space of forty years]* This period is not stated in the Old Testament, but was an old and probably correct tradition among the Jews; Josephus gives the same period. This period embraces the time from his anointing by Samuel to his death, during a part of which David also reigned; and some think this period also includes the time in which Samuel judged Israel; this supposition would not conflict with the present text.

22. *And when he had removed him]* From his office, for this was done some time before his death, on account of his disobedience. 1 Sam. xv, 23, 26, 28. *To whom also he gave testimony]* He bore wit-

said, I have found David the *son of Jesse*, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.

23 Of this man's seed hath God, according to *his* promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

ness; giving a manifest expression of his approbation in the following language: *I have found—a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will*] This is not a literal quotation of any one divine commendation of David recorded in the Scriptures, but is a kind of summary of several passages. (See Psa. lxxxix, 20; 1 Sam. xiii, 14.) The meaning of the latter clause is, that David was one who would, contrary to Saul, obey the Lord in the government of his kingdom, ordering it according to his will. Upon this Mr. Benson remarks:—“When it is said that David *was a man after God's own heart*, it should be understood not of his *private*, but of his *public* character. He was a man after God's own heart, because he ruled the people according to the divine will. He did not allow of *idolatry*; he did not set up for *absolute powers*. He was guided in the government of the nation by the *law of Moses*, as the standing rule of government, and by the *prophet*, or the divine oracle, whereby God gave directions upon particular emergencies. Whatever Saul's private character was, he was not a *good king to Israel*. He did not follow the *law*, the *oracle*, and the *prophet*; but attempted to be *absolute*, and thereby to subvert the *constitution* of the kingdom. That this was the meaning of David's being *a man after God's own heart* will easily appear by comparing 1 Sam. xv, 28, with xxviii, 17, 18; 1 Chron. x, 13, 14; Psa. lxxviii, 70.”

23. *This man's seed*] David's descendants. *According to his promise*] (See Matt. xxii, 42; John vii, 42. Compare Psalm lxxxix, 29, 36; 2 Sam. vii, 16.) *Raised unto Israel a Saviour*] To Israel was the Saviour especially promised, though he came as the Saviour of all men. He was to be of Jewish descent after the flesh; and to the lost children of the house of Israel was his gospel first to be preached: and as Paul was now addressing a Jewish audience, he alludes to the peculiar relation they held as a nation to the Redeemer of mankind; and the burden of the argument is to prove that Jesus is the Saviour of Israel, for whom they have been waiting.

24. *When John had first preached before his coming*] John the Baptist, who presented himself as the forerunner of Christ, saying, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” Matt. iii, 1, 2, 11; John i, 23, 26, 27. *The baptism of repentance*] Those who presented themselves for bap-

25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not *he*: but, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of *his* feet I am not worthy to loose.

26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which

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tism to John took upon themselves vows to live new and righteous lives, breaking off from their sinful courses, and living in expectation of the coming Messiah, whose disciples they were to become upon his advent.

25. *And as John fulfilled his course]* While he was engaged in pursuing his appointed work, fulfilling his ministry, likened to a course or race, from its short duration, and the ardent zeal with which John prosecuted it. *He said, &c.]* These are not the exact words found in the evangelists, but they express the same sense. (See Mark i, 7; Luke iii, 16; John i, 20, 26, 27.) *I am not HE]* I am not the expected Messiah. *Whose shoes—I am not worthy to loose]* Their sandals, made of wood and leather, and strapped upon the bottom of the feet, were unloosed by servants as a guest entered the house, and the feet, having been exposed to the dust, were washed. The meaning of John was, I am not even worthy to be the *servant* of the Messiah, so exalted is his character. The apostle alludes to the office and ministry of John to show that he fulfilled those prophecies referring to the forerunner of the Messiah, and thus established and confirmed the Messiahship of Christ. Isa. xl, 3; Mal. iv, 5.

26. *Children of the stock of Abraham]* Descendants of Abraham, natural born Israelites. *Whosoever among you feareth God]* Proselytes. Verse 16. *Is the word of this salvation]* The message, the tidings of this salvation—that is, the doctrine of repentance and forgiveness through faith in the Redeemer.

27. *Because they knew him not]* In setting forth and proving his resurrection, the apostle must necessarily describe his death. This he does, speaking with all possible gentleness of the conduct of the Jews in his crucifixion, so as not to exasperate his brethren to whom he was speaking, attributing their conduct to ignorance and blindness. They did not know him *as the Messiah*. They did not recognize, or were not convinced by the miraculous tokens of his office and mission. They did not crucify him *as the Redeemer of Israel*, but as a supposed *deceiver*. *Nor yet the voices of the prophets]* They did not understand the meaning of the prophecies read every sabbath in their hearing. They overlooked the true character of the Messiah

are read every sabbath-day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*.

28 And though they found no cause of death in *him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took *him* down from the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulchre.

30 But God raised him from the dead:

31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

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and of his kingdom, expecting a temporal prince and a worldly kingdom. *They have fulfilled them in condemning him*] Although continually hearing these prophecies, still they had been so perversely blind, as that, by their rejection of Christ, and by the death to which they subjected him, they unconsciously fulfilled the very words of their prophets. Psa. xxii, 16-18; Isa. liii, 3, 7-9; Dan. ix, 26.

28. *They found no cause of death in him*] This was the testimony of the Roman governor after repeated examinations, and after listening to the clamorous accusations of the Jewish rulers. "After all their efforts; after the treason of Judas; after their employing false witnesses; still no crime was laid to his charge. The Sanhedrim condemned him for blasphemy; and yet they knew that they could not substantiate this charge before Pilate, and they therefore endeavored to procure his condemnation on the ground of sedition." Luke xxii, 70, 71; xxiii, 1, 2.

29. *Had fulfilled all that was written*] That is, with reference to his death. *They took him down from the tree*] This does not mean that his persecutors and murderers also took him down; for this was not the fact. Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple, begged his body of Pilate, and his request was granted. It is a general expression meaning simply, that he was taken down from the cross; or *they*—the Jews—as Joseph and Nicodemus, who requested him, were Jews.

31. *He was seen many days*] For forty days, at different times and places, was Jesus manifested to his disciples. *Of them which came up with him from Galilee*] Of the apostles and disciples, who were especially appointed to bear witness of his resurrection. (See Acts x, 40, 41.)

32. *And we*] Paul and Barnabas. *Declare unto you glad tidings*] Especially joyful tidings to the Jews, that the long-promised Messiah had actually come. *The promise which was made unto the fathers*] Of a Messiah; spread all over the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

33. *Hath fulfilled—in that he hath raised up Jesus again]* That is, completed and confirmed all the other promises relating to the Messiah by this most convincing and crowning one. “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” Psa. ii, 7. Not that by raising up Jesus he was then begotten to the relation of Son, but by this resurrection his Sonship was declared or confirmed, according to the prophetic promise in the second Psalm. “It is true,” says Mr. Wcsley, “he was the Son of God from eternity. The meaning, therefore, is, I have this day declared thee to be my Son. As St. Paul, elsewhere, ‘Declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.’ Rom. i, 4. And it is with peculiar propriety and beauty that God is said to ‘have begotten him’ on the day when he raised him from the dead, as he seemed then to be born out of the earth anew.”

34. *And as concerning]* And in further proof of this—that is, the fulfillment of the promise and the consequent Messiahship of Christ. *Now no more to return to corruption]* This distinguished the resurrection of Christ from all others. Lazarus had been raised, but was again liable to disease, death, and bodily corruption. The reasoning of the apostle here seems to be, that Christ is additionally proved to be the Messiah, in that his resurrection was final, and not temporary, according to what had been prophesied of him; which prophecies the apostle now recites. *On this wise]* In this manner. *I will give you the sure mercies of David]* I will give to you; that is, to you Jews, the fulfillment of the merciful promises made to David. The apostle here quotes from Isa. lv, 3, where the people are exhorted to obedience, with the assurance that the blessing promised to David shall be bestowed upon them: “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” These promises referred to the reign and blessings attending the kingdom of the Messiah—the promised Son and successor of David, whose kingdom should be perpetual. “The apostle argues that these merciful promises have been proved to be *sure* and true by their *fulfillment* in the resurrection of Jesus; which resurrection (so accomplished as that, agreeable to the prophecy at Psa. xvi, 10, his body did not experience that corruption which results from permanent death) proved him to be the Messiah promised to the fathers.”—BLOOMFIELD.

35 Wherefore he saith also in another *Psalm*, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

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35. *In another Psalm*] (See Psa. xvi, 10.) Peter made use of this passage for the same purpose, when arguing before the Jews in Jerusalem the Messiahship of Christ, alledging that in his resurrection this passage was fulfilled, and could have applied to no other. (See Acts ii, 27, 31.)

36. *For David—fell on sleep*] Here the apostle shows that the promise could not have referred to David himself, as he did *see corruption*, but to his more glorious *Son*, after the flesh. The marginal reading of the sentence, *after he had served his own generation by the will of God*, is, *after he had in his own age served* (or obeyed) *the will of God*, which is probably the most correct. *Fell on sleep*] Died—sweetly and willingly, as one sleeps when wearied. *Was laid unto his fathers*] In the large, deep sepulchres hewed from the rock, where laid the bodies of his family which preceded him. *Saw corruption*] Decayed, as had all the dead before him.

37. *But he, whom God raised again*] Jesus, the lineal descendant of David, according to the promise just quoted. *Saw no corruption*] Did not experience the effects of this universal law; his body not suffering decay after death. (See Acts ii, 31, 34.)

38. *Be it known unto you*] The apostle now commences the application of his discourse, having proved that Jesus was the Messiah, as confirmed by the fulfillment of prophecy, he begins to present the spiritual benefits resulting from his coming, and offers him to them as the object of their faith and love. *Through this man*] By his instrumentality: that is, through the sacrificial death of Jesus. *The forgiveness of sins*] In which is implied all the blessings of the gospel, the first of which must be the forgiveness of past transgressions in those who penitently believe in Him.

39. *And by him all that believe are justified from all things*] Here the apostle Paul announces the blessed doctrine of justification by faith, which is the great theme of nearly all of his epistles. All that believe—fully relying upon him for forgiveness, and are penitent in view of their sins, are absolved from the penalty attached to their

40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets :

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish : for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in nowise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

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disobedience—accounted before God *as if* they had not sinned, and through the sacrifice of Christ, who honored thereby the broken law, we stand acquitted from the fearful consequences of sin, and uncondemned before God, being justified in his divine mind from our past transgressions. As says the apostle, in Rom. v, 1 : “Therefore being *justified by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” *From which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses]* The Mosaic system was chiefly civil, and related principally to the ordering of the life, and the management of the civil polity of the Jews ; so far as it was spiritual, it referred symbolically to Christ and the new dispensation. The systems of sacrifices and ceremonies, in themselves, were unavailing to purge the conscience from guilt, and even to forgive sin, as the apostle clearly shows, Heb. ix, 9–14 ; and besides, there were many crimes for which the Mosaic code had no pardon, and could offer no atonement. As Mr. Scott remarks :—“The only effect of the sacrifices and purgations of the Mosaic law was admission into the congregation again, whence the breach of some positive ceremony had excluded a man : and some offenses punishable with death admitted no sacrifice at all. Whereas, this atonement of Christ reaches to the perfect and eternal forgiveness of every kind and degree of transgression in them that sincerely believe and obey him.”

40. *Beware therefore]* Having offered the encouraging promises of the gospel to those who were willing to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, he adds the succeeding prophetic warning against the obstinate and unbelieving. *In the prophets]* In the book of the prophets ; the twelve minor prophets, from Hosea to Malachi, forming but one book in the Jewish canon. The particular passage cited by the apostle is found in Hab. i, 5 ; its sense is given, although it is not quoted verbatim.

41. *Behold, ye despisers]* The solemn address of the prophet, when first spoken, referred to those who disbelieved the divine threatening, that God would deliver them into the hands of the Chaldeans. It was, however, peculiarly applicable to those who should reject Christ, and lay themselves liable to the dreadful consequences that must follow. *And perish]* Doddridge and others render this, “*and disappear;*” as those that shall perish at once, and vanish, as it were, out

42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

43 Now, when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

44 And the next sabbath-day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

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of sight. Bloomfield renders it, “*and be exceedingly amazed*” at the impending judgments of God. *Work a work]* Perform a work of retribution, referring to the terrible judgments God will bring upon those who despise the gospel. *Ye shall in nowise believe]* “Which you will not believe.” So fearful were these judgments to be that they would not believe them if told beforehand—a figurative expression, showing the awful character of the punishment to be visited upon the despisers. This language was applicable to the terrible temporal calamities that befell the Jewish nation soon after this, and to the more awful doom of finally impenitent Jews and Gentiles in an other world.

42. *And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue]* A different version of this verse, found in the best copies of the New Testament, gives to it the following, and probably the true reading: “And when they, that is, the apostles, were going out of the synagogue of the Jews, the Gentiles (that is, the Gentile proselytes) besought,” &c. *That these words might be preached to them]* These doctrines. They desired further explanations and instructions concerning the gospel of Christ which had been preached by the apostles. *The next sabbath]* That is, the next seventh day, answering to our Saturday, that being the Jewish sabbath.

43. *Now, when the congregation was broken up]* As they dispersed to their homes, the services having closed before. Verse 42. *Persuaded them to continue in the grace of God]* In the gospel of Christ, which, it seems, some had embraced during the discourse—this is called the grace of God, because, in the gospel, grace is eminently seen in its origin, in its operation, and in its heavenly reward. (See Acts xiv, 3; xx, 24; Rom. v, 2; Gal. v, 4; Col. i, 6; Heb. xii, 15.)

44. *Almost the whole city together]* Gentiles as well as Jews; a great multitude, attracted by the reports of the apostle’s discourse.

45. *Filled with envy]* At the success of the apostles in securing the

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles:

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

attention of the multitudes, and in obtaining so many disciples from among them. *Blaspheming*] “Reviling;” denying what they said, and adding insult to their injury by slandering the apostles.

46. *Waxed bold*] “Speaking boldly.” Increased in Christian boldness, as the persecution they began to experience called for firmness. As their day, so was their strength. *It was necessary*] It was in accordance with the instructions of Christ. Verse 26; Acts. iii, 26; Matt. x, 6, &c. This great favor having been bestowed upon them for “their fathers’ sakes,” that the Saviour should arise in their nation, and the gospel be first offered for their faith, a peculiar obligation rested upon them, and a severe penalty must follow their neglect. *Ye put it from you*] Reject it. *Judge yourselves*] Discern, discover, make known. *Unworthy of everlasting life*] By your opposition and reviling, you act as if you were unworthy of eternal life; you do, in fact, judge and condemn yourselves, or show yourselves to be unworthy of that eternal life which only can be obtained by faith in the despised Jesus. *Lo, we turn to the Gentiles*] Not from the Jews every where, because he afterward preaches to them in other places, in every Jewish synagogue, (Acts xvii, 2,) but from the Jews of Antioch. He had given them the first opportunity, preached the good news of the gospel first in their synagogue; but as they had generally rejected and reviled it, he now turns from them to the Gentile inhabitants of Antioch.

47. *For so hath the Lord commanded*] (See Isa. xlix, 6.) The apostle here shows from a Scripture prediction the propriety of his offering the gospel to the Gentiles. In the chapter from which the quotation is taken, the character and office of the Messiah are presented; and, in this verse, the extent of his commission—to be not only the Redeemer of Israel, but a “light to the Gentiles, and for salvation unto the ends of the earth.”

48. *They were glad*] “Rejoiced greatly” to hear that to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews, this great salvation was to be offered. *Glorified the word of the Lord*] Saw its excellence, and spoke in its praise;

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

expressed aloud their admiration of its universal benevolence, "as worthy of the impartiality of the God of the whole universe." *And as many as were ordained to eternal life]* The original word, translated *ordained*, signifies *disposed or prepared, determined, resolved*. There is nothing in this passage relating to an absolute decree, or any predestination to salvation, irrespective of the voluntary consent of the subjects, but reference is had entirely to such a disposition of heart as fitted one for the attainment of eternal life. "Such as were so disposed and prepared, believed through divine grace, and embraced the gospel, in opposition to those who, by rejecting the gospel, 'judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life.'" Upon this passage Mr. Wesley makes the following comment:—"St. Luke does not say 'foreordained.' He is not speaking of what was done from eternity, but what was done through the preaching of the gospel. He is describing that ordination, and that only, which was at the very time of hearing it. During this sermon those *believed*, says the apostle, to whom God then gave power to believe. It is as if he had said, They believed, 'whose hearts the Lord opened,' as he expresses it in a clearly parallel place, speaking of the same kind of ordination. Acts xvi, 14, &c. It is observable, the original word is not once used in Scripture to express eternal predestination of any kind. The sum is, All those, and those only, who were now ordained, now believed. Not that God rejected the rest: it was his will that they also should be saved; but they thrust salvation from them. Nor were they who then believed constrained to believe. But grace was there first copiously offered them. And they did not thrust it away, so that a great multitude even of the Gentiles were converted. In a word, the expression properly implies a present operation of divine grace working faith in the hearers."

49. *The word of the Lord]* The gospel. *Throughout all the region]* The country around Antioch.

50. *The devout and honorable women]* Gentile ladies of high rank, united to husbands who had influence in the city, and who had been converted to Judaism, and were even now considered devout, according to the Jewish estimation, for their faithful attention to the ceremonics of their law. *Chief men of the city]* The magistrates of the city. They may have represented the apostles to them as se-

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.

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ditious men, and setters forth of new religions, opposed to the tranquillity and safety of the city, and to their heathen worship. *Expelled them out of their coasts]* Probably not using force, but ordering them to leave the limits of their territories; to which command the apostles, not resisting the arm of the law, submit, and leave.

51. *But they shook off the dust of their feet against them]* For thus our Saviour had commanded them to do, as they departed from any house or city that did not receive them, (Matt. x, 44,) as a testimony against them of their having been offered Christ and rejecting him as their Saviour. “The act of shaking off the dust of their feet showed very significantly their abhorrence of the guilt which was involved in rejecting the gospel. It showed that they dreaded to have any part or lot with a people that arrayed themselves so strenuously against God. And as they acted not in their private capacity, but as ambassadors and ministers of God, they thus gave warning of the rejection from God which awaited opposers, if they continued to despise the gospel.”—RIPLEY. *Came into Iconium]* A populous city, east of Antioch, in the province of Lyconia.

52. *And the disciples were filled with joy]* They were filled with spiritual joy—the natural effect of the religion they had lately embraced. Though their beloved teachers were drawn away, and they themselves probably persecuted, still, in the midst of all afflictions, they were *filled* with unspeakable and unalloyed joy. *And with the Holy Ghost]* They were richly endowed with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, in his office as sanctifier, reference, probably, not being had here to the power of working miracles, as there is no mention of the bestowment of this upon them through the instrumentality of the apostles.

## CHAPTER XIV.

1. Paul and Barnabas driven by persecution from Iconium. 8. Paul heals the cripple at Lystra; he and Barnabas worshiped as gods. 19. Paul stoned. 21. They pass through the different churches confirming the disciples. 26. Return to Antioch, and report success.

AND it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude, both of the Jews, and also of the Greeks, believed.

2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren.

3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

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1. *So spake]* So conclusively, so powerfully, and with so much of the influence of the Holy Ghost. *Of the Greeks]* Probably proselytes who spoke the Greek language; although some suppose them to have been Gentiles drawn to the Jewish synagogue by the fame of the apostles.

2. *But the unbelieving Jews]* Those who refused to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah, and rejected the doctrines of the apostles. *Stirred up the Gentiles]* Instigated, set on the heathens, against the brethren—Paul and Barnabas—and those who had embraced Christ. *Evil-affected]* Imbittered, prejudiced against.

3. *Long time therefore abode they]* In order to build up and confirm the faith of the numerous converts, and to overcome the opposition and prejudice against them, by their humble, pious lives, and public instructions. *Speaking boldly in the Lord]* These words may either mean that they boldly preached Jesus, that is, his doctrines and religion, or, as many commentators render them, “speaking freely in reliance upon the Lord.” *Gave testimony]* That is, the Lord gave assurance or evidence of the truth of their doctrine by giving them power to work miracles. *Word of his grace]* The gospel. *Granted signs and wonders]* Miracles; which were signs of the presence and power of God, and wonderful for their extraordinary character.

4. *Was divided]* Held different opinions of the doctrines of the apostles—the one party approving, the other rejecting. *Part held with the Jews]* Joined with them in their enmity against the brethren, as apostates from their religion. *Part with the apostles]* Espoused their cause, probably from sympathy.

5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews, with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them,

6 They were ware of *it*, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:

7 And there they preached the gospel.

8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked.

9 The same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

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5. *When there was an assault made]* When there was a full purpose, a set design, to make an attack upon them, for they did not wait for its execution. *To use them despitefully]* With violence and abuse. *To stone them]* As blasphemers against the law. Deut. xiii, 6. So they stoned Stephen, as speaking "blasphemous words against the law and the temple," Acts vi, 13; and so also they attempted to stone Christ for supposed blasphemy. John x, 33.

6. *They were ware of it]* By some means the plot came to their knowledge. The original rather means, "Having taken consideration respecting the matter, what was best to be done." *Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia]* Lycaonia was another province of Asia Minor, adjoining Pisidia on the north-east. These two cities were in a southerly direction from Iconium.

8. *Impotent in his feet]* Having no strength in his feet, they being entirely incapable of bearing the weight of his body. He *sat*, emphatically expressing his helplessness, not having the power of walking. *A cripple from his mother's womb]* His weakness was not a late or sudden affection, but had been of long continuance, even from his birth, so that he had never been able to walk; thus making him a most suitable subject for the display of divine power in his cure. The derivation of the word *cripple*, Mr. Bloomfield remarks, is suggested by the *old* spelling of the word *creep*, one who can only *creep*, and not walk upright.

9. *Perceiving that he had faith to be healed]* Seeing manifested in his countenance, as he gazed upon him, that look of confidence in his truth, and power to do him good, that fitted him to become a subject of miraculous energy; or the divine power now bestowed upon him, enabled him to discern this state of heart in the impotent man. This cripple may have heard of the miracles performed by the apostles in Iconium, and on this account had great faith in their ability to cure him.

10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

10. *Stand upright]* The more evidently to exhibit the miraculous power. *He leaped and walked]* Placing the miracle beyond a doubt of its reality, and expressing the most natural course of one for the first time able to use his feet. (See Acts iii, 6, 7.)

11. *In the speech of Lycaonia]* What this was, cannot be certainly known. The original language of these provinces was Syriac; but having been conquered by the Greeks, the latter language gained the ascendancy. The present dialect probably was a mixture of corrupt Greek and Syriac. "St. Paul evidently did not understand what was spoken, otherwise he would have prevented the preparation for sacrifice."—BLOOMFIELD. *The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men]* Heathen mythology is full of traditions of their divinities, whom they supposed to superintend human affairs, visiting the earth, especially cities consecrated to their honor, in human shape. And, witnessing this astonishing and merciful miracle, exhibiting evidently superhuman power, they immediately concluded that their city was honored with the presence of their gods incarnate.

12. *They called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius]* "Mercury was esteemed the god of letters and eloquence, and was usually represented as an active young man: having, therefore, determined to consider that Paul and Barnabas were gods, it was natural enough that they should regard Paul, he being the younger, and more eloquent of the two, as Mercury. The appearance of Barnabas may probably, in like manner, have reminded the Lystrians of the appearance in which Jupiter was represented to them by painters and sculptors. This was a venerable, full-bearded personage, in the advanced prime of life, of grave countenance, and majestic presence—not looking as one prone to speak, but as one whose mind was deeply concentrated on thoughts and purposes within; and yet not so deeply as to be entirely unobservant of the outer world and its concerns."—*Pic. Bible.* Jupiter was the chief of the heathen gods, and was usually represented as attended by Mercury, who was his messenger. There appears to have been a temple of Jupiter in Lystra. Mr. Harrington remarks:—"The persuasion of their being Jupiter and Mercury might gain the more easily upon the minds of the Lycaonians on account of the well-known fable of Jupiter and

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which

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Mercury, who were said to have descended from heaven in human shape, and to have been entertained by Lycaon, from whom the Lycaonians received their name."

13. *Then the priest of Jupiter]* The chief of the priests; "the chief priest of the temple of Jupiter." The name of the deity is here used for his temple. *Which was before their city]* It was customary among the ancients to erect a temple to the tutelary or guardian divinity of their cities, near their walls. In front of Lystra there was a temple to Jupiter, who was considered the especial protector of their city. *Brought oxen and garlands unto the gates]* Brought chaplets of flowers to place around the horns of the victim, according to their idolatrous custom, when an animal was offered in sacrifice. It is not certain whether these sacrifices were brought to the gates of the city, or to the portals of the temple, or to the doors of the house where the apostles were at this time. *And would have done sacrifice with the people]* Joining with the people in their belief in the presence of deities, he would have offered the same sacrifices and prayers to them that he offered to Jupiter.

14. *They rent their clothes]* Significant of their surprise and utter abhorrence of this act. By this expressive symbol, the Jews exhibited their grief at the death of friends, or in a public calamity. They were also accustomed to rend their garments when they heard blasphemy, or witnessed any great transgression of their law, expressing at once their grief and abhorrence. Matt. xxvi, 65; Gen. xxxvii, 29, 34; xliv, 13; Josh. vii, 6.

15. *We also are men of like passions with you]* As if he had said, We are *men* only, not gods; the Greek term denoting the being subject to those infirmities natural to mortality—passions, affections, wants, weakness, diseases, death. We are frail mortals like yourselves, far from being gods. *Ye should turn from these vanities]* These vain ceremonies, or the worship of these vain idol gods. By this term, as expressive of their utter inability to help their worshipers, the folly of their ceremonies, and the irrational character of all idolatries, heathen gods and idol worship are known in the Old Testament. Isa. xlvi, 9; Jer. xiv, 22; 1 Cor. viii, 4. *Unto the living God]* As distin-

made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein :

16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

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guished from these dead idols. *Which made heaven and earth]* The apostle, as ever, seizes this happy opportunity of preaching the true God, while he forbade their idol worship to himself and Barnabas. Probably for the first time, in reference to many of them, this great fact was announced. Many idolatrous Gentiles, it may be, for the first time heard this great truth, and learned the origin of the universe, concerning which the best-educated heathens had but the most vague and idle notions.

16. *Who—suffered all nations to walk in their own ways]* That is, the Gentile nations; for the Jews were an exception. God is said to have suffered them to do thus, not that he gave them no light or direction, so that they might discover a better way; for we learn that even among them "he left not himself without a witness," so as to take away every excuse for not worshiping him as God; nor that he suffered them to go on in sin with impunity: but on account of their willful wickedness, he left them, in his infinite wisdom, to their own voluntarily perverted reasons—not having raised up for them a prophet or religious instructor, or sent to them a written revelation.

17. *Nevertheless he left not himself without witness]* Although he had not given a written revelation, still he had given continual exhibitions of his presence, power, and providence; so that the heathen themselves had always been conscious of a higher power, although, in their sinful folly, their minds had become darkened as to the true God. The goodness of God as exhibited in all his works and providences, the gracious and plentiful seasons, were all calculated to reveal his character, and call forth the warmest sentiments of gratitude toward him, and in not yielding this to him—all that he required of them—he left them without excuse. *Filling our hearts with food and gladness]* That is, satisfying our bodies with food, and filling our hearts with gladness. Dr. Hales remarks, that "the apostle leaves them to draw the *conclusion* from these premises, that it would be the height of ingratitude (and impiety) to transfer to the *creature* the worship due only to the Creator."

19 And there came thither *certain Jews* from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch,

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19. *Jews from Antioch]* Antioch in Pisidia, where a persecution had been excited against Paul, and from whence he had been forcibly driven. Not satisfied with their previous cruelties, they now follow him to Lystra. Acts xiii, 14, 50, 51. "Men will often travel further to do evil than they will to do good; and many men show more zeal in opposing the gospel than professed Christians do in advancing it." *Iconium]* (See Aets xiii, 51.) *Who persuaded the people]* That they were enemies to their gods, and seeking to overthrow their worship, and introduce another religion, and, therefore, should be put to death. *Having stoned Paul]* Whom just now they had worshiped as a god. What a striking exhibition of the fickleness of human popularity!

To this stoning Paul refers when alluding to his sufferings for the sake of Christ and the gospel. 2 Cor. xi, 25. The verse may either mean that these Jews persuaded the multitude to permit them to stone Paul, or to stone him themselves. *Drew him out of the city]* With such insults the dead bodies of malefactors were treated; they being dragged by the heels out of the city gate, (according to the law which enjoined their removal;) and, if not interred, were cast forth as food for the dogs and birds of prey. *Supposing he had been dead]* Not that Paul feigned death, as some have idly surmised, or that he actually died, and was miraculously restored to life, but he was at the point of death, had swooned away, and was entirely senseless. Paul, as the chief speaker, seems to have been the principal object of persecution.

20. *Stood round about him]* Anxiously watching the result, fearing the worst, and probably earnestly praying for his recovery. *He rose up]* It would seem that miraculous aid must have been given the apostle, or he would not so soon have recovered from the effect of his stoning, and been able the next day to return to Derbe.

21. *Had taught many]* Literally, "made many disciples." This city was the most distant place which they had visited in their tour; and now they commence their return, visiting the churches they had formed, comforting and strengthening them.

22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church,

22. *Confirming the souls of the disciples]* Strengthening and establishing them in the truths of the gospel. There is evidently no allusion here to the episcopal rite of confirmation, by which penitents are admitted to the full privileges of the church, no ceremony being performed; but the *souls* of these young converts were encouraged by the "hopes set before them" to endure the great fight of affliction and persecution to which they were now exposed. *Exhorting]* Presenting and urging motives. *And that we must through much tribulation]* That is, this was one topic of the apostles' exhortation—that, in the economy of grace, tribulation and persecution were to be made instruments for sanctifying and preparing them for the kingdom of heaven. Thus our Saviour taught: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it." Matt. xvi, 24, 25.

"The persecutions and various troubles to which pious persons are at any time subjected in this life, are designed, in the providence of God, to test their faith, to confirm their patience and love, to withdraw their affections from the world, and excite their aspirations for that holy state of bliss where the righteous will be for ever with the Lord. Troubles are an almost essential part of the Lord's discipline in training up his children on earth for heaven." (See Heb. xii, 5, 6.)

23. *And when they had ordained them elders in every church]* From among these converts, the most suitable persons, as to age and ability, were selected to be ministers and pastors, very probably at first exercising their trades and professions in connection with their spiritual labors. These were solemnly set apart by the apostles to be *presbyters* or *elders*; here equivalent, perhaps, to the general term *officers*. The word rendered *ordained*, signifies to *appoint* or *constitute*. The original term expresses usually the act of raising the hand by way of approving a person or resolution in a public assembly, or the act of placing the hands upon the head of a person set apart for the ministerial office. Both of these acts may have been performed at the ordination of these elders; the choice of the apostles may have been approved by the congregation, by the raising of their hands, and the hands of Paul and Barnabas were laid upon their heads, accompanied with prayer and fasting when they constituted them to

and had prayed with fasting, they commanded them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:

26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled.

27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church

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be presbyters, spiritual pastors of the churches. The appointment of officers in the churches was made a matter of solemn moment by the apostles. They spent a season in earnest prayer for the blessing of God upon them, accompanying the whole with devotional fasting. *Commended them to the Lord]* Committed them into the Saviour's hands, whose ministers they were, and there left them. How blessed thus to place our friends in the arms of Christ, when, in his providence, we are called to leave them for a time!

24. *Passed through Pisidia]* On their way back to Syria and Judea.

25. *Went down into Attalia]* This town was a seaport in Pamphylia, not far west from Perga.

26. *And thence sailed to Antioch]* Antioch in Syria, from whence they had set out on their itinerary. Probably coming by ship from Attalia to Seleucia, (Aets xiii, 4,) on the coast of Syria, and then crossing the country to Antioch. *From whence they had been recommended]* In Antioch, as we have seen, (Aets xiii, 1, 2,) they had been set apart by a special call of the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel to the Jews and heathen in Asia Minor, and had been commended to the protection and blessing of God, while engaged in their laborious and exposed calling. *Which they fulfilled]* God had been with them, and, in the face of a thousand obstacles and imminent dangers, they had now accomplished it.

27. *And when they were come, &c.]* This was the first foreign mission under the Christian dispensation. The apostles had been sent out by the church in Antioch, accompanied with their sincere prayers; and now all are interested upon their return to listen to the report of their successes, and are therefore called together by the apostles. *They rehearsed]* Related. *All that God had done with them]* Making them the honored instruments. They take none of the glory of their success to themselves; God had accomplished it all. *How he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles]* That is, given the Gentiles an opportunity of believing in the gospel, opening the way by his own divine providence.

together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

28. *And there they abode long time with the disciples]* How long they remained in Antioch is not certainly known. If, as is generally believed, the tour just described took place about A. D. 45, or 46, and the council held at Jerusalem, recorded in the next chapter, occurred in A. D. 51 or 53, then an interval of from five to eight years intervened, concerning which the sacred historian is silent. It is certain, however, that Paul made several journeys of which we have no record in the New Testament; possibly some of these journeys occurred at this time. It is very probable that all this time Paul and Barnabas were engaged in extending the work of God in the surrounding provinces. Thus Paul tells us that he preached the gospel as far as Illyria, on the Adriatic Gulf. Rom. xv, 19. "Many of the tribulations and perils through which the apostle Paul passed, are not mentioned by St. Luke, particularly those of which he himself speaks. 2 Cor. xi, 23-27. He had been five times scourged by the Jews; thrice beaten by the Romans; thrice shipwrecked; a whole night and a day in the deep, probably saving his life upon a plank; besides frequent journeyings, and perils from his countrymen, from the heathen, from robbers in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, among false brethren, &c. Of none of these have we any circumstantial account. Probably most of these happened in the five years which elapsed between the apostles' return to Antioch, and the council of Jerusalem."—CLARKE.

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## CHAPTER XV.

1. Judaizing teachers from Jerusalem sow dissensions in the church concerning circumcision. 2. Paul and Barnabas are sent to Jerusalem, and place the matter before the apostles and elders. 6. A council is called. 22. The decision sent by letters to the churches. 36. Strife between Paul and Barnabas.

AND certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

1. *And certain men]* The majority of the Jewish converts, perhaps, still believed that the gospel had not superseded the Mosaic law, and that all the heathen must become Jews—become circumcised, which was the prime distinctive rite in the Mosaic ritual—before they could become Christians, and that, in connection with the gospel, the cere-

2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles : and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

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monial requirements of the law were to be attended to. In Antioch, the church was composed of both Jews and Gentiles, and this question early became a source of unhappy dissension. It appears, also, that certain persons, who were also Pharisees, upon their own responsibility, came down from Jerusalem, where the church was wholly composed of Jews, and where they clung with the most tenacity to their national prejudices, and instigated the Jewish portion of the Antiochan church against the Gentile, involving them in a controversy upon this subject. *Taught the brethren]* The brethren in Antioch—the converted Gentiles. *After the manner of Moses]* According to the institution of Moses. Circumcision being the most important, and the initiatory rite, is put for the whole ceremonial law of Moses. *Ye cannot be saved]* Thus making the gospel utterly powerless as the only means of salvation.

2. *No small dissension and disputation with them]* The minds of the apostles were united and clear on this subject. They at once resisted these intermeddling Jews ; disputed their doctrines, and held not a few discussions with them. The term dissension here denotes a warm, a zealous discussion and controversy, not implying any improper heat or temper on the part of the apostles. *They determined]* All appear to have united in this determination. *Should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders]* For at Jerusalem the church had been first formed ; here were the majority of the apostles and the elders, the older and most experienced disciples, who had been in the church from the beginning—to these the question is now to be committed ; the apostles being inspired men, and the representatives of Christ upon the earth, it was but right that their decision should be obtained. And by gaining their opinion, the question would not only be settled for Antioch, but throughout all the churches of the Gentiles.

3. *And being brought on their way by the church]* That is, a portion of the church, as was usual, went, out of respect, a part of the way with them—“ being sent forward, or accompanied on their way, by the representatives of the church.” It may also mean, that the church provided them with the necessary means for prosecuting this journey. *Passed through Phenice]* Traveled down the Phenician coast, forming the north-west boundary of Palestine ; of which province Tyre and

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees, which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

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Sidon were the principal cities: *Samaria*] The central division of the Holy Land; they would cross from the Phenician coast through Samaria in their direct route from Antioch to Jerusalem. *Declaring the conversion of the Gentiles*] Over all these countries Christianity had spread; and these faithful men of God, knowing the comfort and inspiration that such intelligence must impart to them, spread the glad tidings of the work of God in the upper provinces as they go, relating what God had wrought among the Gentiles. *Caused great joy*] As this exceeded the first expectations of Jewish believers, that the Gentiles also should be called to this great salvation; they rejoiced in the triumphs of their Master, and in the benefits that must accrue to the happy souls that had believed. The true Christian always rejoices in a revival of religion wherever it may take place, because precious souls are saved, and Jesus honored.

4. *They were received of the church, &c.*] This was probably a private meeting, collected together to receive them, and not the public assembly soon after called to discuss the important question of their mission. This was designed to be of a more social character, to receive intelligence of the spread of the work under the labors of Paul and Barnabas, and for offering them fraternal greetings and religious exercises. "It is pleasing to notice here the mention of the church, as well as of its officers and of the apostles. All felt an interest in the prosperity of the Christian cause, and were united, as in a common concern. A good pattern for Christians in every age. Between the officers and the body of the church, heartfelt union and mutual interest ought ever to be cherished."

5. *But there rose up certain, &c.*] In relating the success of the gospel in the different cities where they had preached, and the peculiar obstacles they had met, they could not well avoid alluding to the dissensions caused by the question of circumcision in churches composed of both Jewish and Gentile converts. Immediately upon the introduction of the topic, certain of the church, who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees, and were educated to be peculiarly superstitious in their attention to the ceremonial law, and who had not yet so far learned of Christ, that this law was done away, being fulfilled by his death; "started up," as the original forcibly expresses it, and as-

6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago, God made choice among us, that the Gentiles, by my mouth, should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

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serted their confident opinion that Gentile Christians should be circumcised. *Which believed*] Maintained, taught.

6. *And the apostles and elders came together*] The public assembly, where the multitude were gathered together, was no place to discuss calmly, and with proper deliberation, so weighty a question; so the apostles do not enter into the argument, but seem to listen in silence to the hasty judgment of the Pharisees. The apostles and presbyters of the church into whose hands the Lord had committed his gospel, and who were responsible to him for its purity, and whose decisions would be final, not only for Jerusalem, but also for the whole company of disciples everywhere, are summoned together. This authority Christ gave to them. Matt. xviii, 18-20. This is what is called the *first council* at Jerusalem. The members of the church, it would seem from verscs 12, 22, 23, came in during the discussion; but the consultation was confined to the apostles and elders, and they signified their concurrence in the result of their deliberations.

7. *And when there had been much disputing*] Not implying anger or unfriendly rebuke, but warm discussion, and strong contrary opinions. Those who held to the necessity of the ceremonial law, not having personally witnessed the divine tokens of God's approbation of the uncircumcised Gentiles, held with great tenacity to what they erroneously believed to be the truth of God. We may innocently entertain different opinions from our brethren, and urge them with decision, without being ruffled in temper, or disposed unjustly to censure our antagonists, who may be alike conscientious. The apostles withheld their opinions until the subject had been fully discussed by the brethren present, and all the different views fairly presented, that, in their decision, they might meet all the objections urged against the view they were unanimously led to take under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. *Peter rose up*] With great propriety, as he had received, by personal revelation, a commission in particular to the Gentiles, and had been the first to preach the gospel to them. *A good while ago*] An indefinite period. According to the common reckoning, it had been from ten to twelve years since Peter had preached to the household of Cornelius. *God made choice among us, that—by my mouth, &c.*] "God hath made choice of me;" the plural

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us :

9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear ?

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being used for the singular, "that the Gentiles should hear the gospel by my mouth, and believe: that is, that I should be the first instrument of the conversion of the Gentiles." (Sec Acts x.)

8. *And God, which knoweth the hearts]* And therefore could be deceived by no professions of faith and penitence; and who saw their spiritual fitness to become members of his church. *Bare them witness]* By bestowing upon them the Holy Ghost in both his enlightening and cleansing offices, and in his miraculous gifts, in the same manner that he had witnessed to the conversion of Jewish converts on the day of Pentecost. Acts x, 44-46.

9. *And put no difference between us and them]* That is, receiving them to his approbation, both circumcised and uncircumcised upon the same terms, and bestowing upon them the same blessings. *Purifying their hearts by faith]* Cleansing them from sin, of which circumcision was the symbol, through faith in the same Redeemer. "The argument here is plainly to this effect, That God, by pouring his Holy Spirit on the uncircumcised Gentiles, as he had done upon the circumcised Jews, had plainly demonstrated that he had received them to his favor, and made no discrimination, as to his choicest gifts, between them and the Jews; and that legal purification, which seemed wanting to them on account of their noncircumcision, he had fully and abundantly supplied in 'purifying their hearts by faith'; and therefore, saith he, your endeavor to impose upon them these legal observances, to render them acceptable to God, after so signal an evidence that he accepteth them without them, must be a 'tempting God,' as that phrase constantly imports a distrusting or disbelieving him after sufficient evidence vouchsafed of his good-will and pleasure."—WHITBY.

10. *Why tempt ye God]* "Try the forbearance of God, by perversely resisting his will;" or, Why demand of him further proof or test, after such convincing testimonies of his will and approbation? *To put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples]* Under the figure of a yoke, the burdensome ceremonial rites, and legal observances of the Mosaic law are signified. By thus imposing all these oppressive requirements upon the Gentile converts, they placed them in the same position that they were before the gospel was preached; the Gentiles

11 But we believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they.

12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me.

becoming then members of the Jewish church by submitting to its ceremonial law. This Mosaic law the apostle also styles *a yoke of bondage*, in contrast with the spiritual liberty which characterizes the gospel. [Which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?] The ceremonial law was burdened with such a multitude of requirements, that transgression was almost unavoidable, and therefore caused those who were conscientious, continual uneasiness. It could not cleanse the heart from guilt; and thus continual reference was necessarily had to the atoning sacrifice offered as a propitiation for sin. Its heavy tithes and numerous sacrifices were exceedingly burdensome to the Jewish people; and had not God, by a special providence, rendered both their fields and their flocks very fruitful, they could not possibly have borne so painful a ritual.

11. *But we believe]* We, Jewish apostles. *That through the grace of the Lord, &c.]* "This," says Dr. Clarke, "seems to be an answer to an objection, 'Has not God designed to save us, the Jews, by an observance of the law; and them, the Gentiles, by the faith of the gospel?' No: for we Jews can be saved no other way than through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; and this is the way in which the Gentiles in question have been saved. There is but one way of salvation for Jews and Gentiles, the grace, mercy, or favor, coming by and through the Lord Jesus, the Christ; this is now fully opened to the Gentiles; and we believe we shall be saved in the same way."

12. *Then all the multitude kept silence]* The whole assembly, moved by the solemn and convincing words of Peter, waited in silence to hear a confirmation of what the apostle had asserted from the lips of those who had been laboring among the Gentiles. It was the silence of conviction, for the arguments of the apostle could not be gainsayed. This favorable silence Paul and Barnabas improved, in relating the events of their recent tours, the numerous conversions, the evidences of the Holy Spirit's presence, the miracles they were permitted to work in confirmation of the correctness of their course, and the approbation of God upon their labors.

13. *James answered]* This was the son of Alpheus, surnamed *the Less*, to distinguish him from the James whom Herod the king had

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all

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put to death. Acts xii, 17. James evidently presided here, which is a proof that no supremacy was given to St. Peter.

14. *Simeon]* Another form of the name Simon: Simon Peter being intended, who had just now spoken. *How God at the first]* In what manner God first signified his will that the Gentiles should receive the gospel. *Did visit the Gentiles]* Show favor to them, visit them in mercy. *To take out of them a people for his name]* To secure, by the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles, as he had among the Jews, a people called by his name, and devoted to his honor—a peculiar people, the people of God.

15. *And to this agree the words of the prophets]* That is, the conversion of the Gentiles was agreeable to the predictions of several of the prophets; a specimen of which James proceeds to quote. (Compare Isa. ii, 2-4; xl ix, 6; Micah iv, 1-4.) *As it is written]* The quotation is taken from Amos ix, 11, 12; and the meaning of the passage is given, although not in the precise language of our version of it.

16. *After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down]* The prophet had been predicting the overthrow of the Jews, but *after this*—after their desolation—the word of God foretells a recovery, and a restoration to prosperity, to be enjoyed not only by the Jews, but by the “remnant of Edom,” “the heathen upon whom” his “name would be called.” This passage the ancient Jews applied to the times of the Messiah, as one appellation of him was *Bar Naphli*, (*fallen down;*) the name being derived from this very quotation from Amos. *I will build again]* Will re-establish. *The tabernacle of David]* A figurative expression for the house or kingdom of David. The most ancient habitations being tents and tabernacles—booths—a man’s house is usually, in the Hebrew language, called *his tabernacle*. *Which is fallen down]* Depressed, in ruins, as the house of David had been since the captivity.

17. *That the residue of men]* That is, others besides the Jews. The passage may be rendered, “That the remainder of men may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called.” According to the idiom of the Hebrew, the sentence, *upon whom my name is called*, signifies those who are consecrated to me,

the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

20 But that we write unto them that they abstain from pol-

who worship me. "The original Hebrew is, 'that they may possess the remnant of Edom,' which many critics think is corrupted; but the Edomites being great enemies of the church of Israel, the calling of them may mean, that all the residue of men, even the very enemies of the Jews, should be converted; and so both the Hebrew and the apostle's words will agree in sense."—HOLDEN. *Who doeth all these things?* That is, in his providence secures the fulfillment of all these prophecies.

18. *Known unto God are all his works]* As if he had said, This introduction of the Gentiles unto his favor and kingdom is no new and unforeseen event on the part of God; but this prophecy proves it ever to have been his intention in the fullness of days to bring in the outcasts, through the gospel of his Son. *From the beginning of the world]* Literally, *from eternity*. This knowledge of all future events by the divine Being is styled *his prescience* or foreknowledge. What a comforting thought to the Christian, amid all the confusion and surprising changes continually exhibited on the face of the earth, that none of these are unforeseen or unprovided for in the infinite knowledge and wisdom of God! It may seem to man impossible to bring order out of this confusion; to secure, by the apparently slow operation of the principles of Christianity, the promised spiritual subjugation of all the nations and kingdoms of the earth to Christ; but with God nothing is impossible!

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan his work in vain;  
God is his own interpreter,  
And he will make it plain."

19. *My sentence]* My opinion—my judgment. In this, he expresses the corresponding sentiment of all the apostles, they not dissenting—his sentence also having the force of inspiration. *That we trouble not them]* That we do not molest them with unnecessary disputation upon unimportant subjects—that we do not burden them with irksome, heavy, and unnecessary rites.

20. *But that we write unto them]* While the Gentile Christians were thus publicly relieved from the burdens of the ceremonial law, there

lutions of idols, and *from fornication*, and *from things strangled*, and *from blood*.

were certain practices common among the heathen into which the converts would be liable to run, which would be at once peculiarly offensive to the Jew, and abhorrent to the principles of Christianity. *That they abstain from pollutions of idols]* That is, from meats offered to idols, as explained in verse 29. Among the Gentiles, after the victim had been offered in the temple, and a portion had been given to the priests, and sometimes another eaten by the offerer himself and his friends upon the spot, the remainder was taken home by the priests for domestic uses, and sometimes was sent to the public shambles to be sold. The Gentiles believed that, in partaking of sacrifices and other consecrated meats, they had fellowship with the gods. Meats of this kind, the Jews were taught, by their religion, to hold in abomination; and considered all who partook of them as subjecting themselves to the pollution of idolatry. On this account, therefore, though, in fact, as the idols were nothing, the food itself could not be affected, the apostle recommends the Gentile converts, out of respect to the feelings and sentiments of Jewish Christians, to abstain from all meats offered to idols. (See 1 Cor. viii; x, 19-33.) *And from fornication]* A special injunction to avoid this transgression of the moral as well as ceremonial law, is given here, from the fact of its prevalence among the Gentiles, the little disapprobation with which it was regarded, and also because it was connected with their festivals, forming even one of their *religious* rites. In the mind of a Jew, idolatry and fornication were inseparably connected. (Compare 1 Cor. v, 5; x, 7, 8; Col. iii, 5; Rev. ii, 14, 20.) The apostle, therefore, after giving his opinion, that Gentile converts ought to abstain from meats consecrated to idols, naturally recommends the abstaining from that prostitution which was the usual consequence of partaking of such meats. *From things strangled, and from blood]* Referring to the flesh of animals killed by strangling or by suffocation, by which means the blood of the animal was retained within its body. This was a prevalent custom among the ancient heathen nations. "They used to inclose the carcass of the animal (so killed, that the blood of the animal should remain in it) in an oven, or deep stewing vessel, and thus cook it in its own vapor or steam. As to the *blood*—the heathens, when butchering an animal, carefully preserved this; and mixing it up with flour and unguents, formed various sorts of dishes. Now as *both* the foregoing sorts of food were strictly forbidden by the Mosaic law, there was ample reason to forbid them to the Gentile Christians in order to avoid giving offense to

21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day.

their Jewish brethren."—BLOOMFIELD. Some maintain that this prohibition of blood was not founded in any temporary cause, but has the same authority under the gospel dispensation which it had under the law, and even from the time of the deluge, when the command to abstain from blood was given to Noah and his sons. To this it is answered, that no argument can be drawn in favor of this opinion, from its being introduced in the same decree with fornication, which is always unlawful, because duties ceremonial and moral are often mingled in the same general precept without any distinction of their nature. It is not a proof of the perpetuity of the prohibition, that it was not peculiar to the Mosaic covenant, but was in force from the period of the flood. That there were ceremonial ordinances before the law was given from Sinai, is evident from the institution of sacrifices and circumcision, and from the distinction of animals into clean and unclean, which already existed when Noah entered into the ark. As these rites, some of which were of a still more ancient date, are confessedly abolished, the antiquity of the precept concerning blood can throw no light upon the question concerning its duration. It is a groundless fancy, that there is a moral reason for abstinence from blood, or that it was originally enjoined in order to restrain men from shedding the blood of their brethren. Between these two things there is no conceivable connection. It is not from literal thirst for blood that murder is committed; and they who most plentifully use the blood of animals, are conscious of no greater propensity to kill their neighbors than those who abhor it. Had men been forbidden to take away the lives of the inferior animals, it might have been asserted with more plausibility, that the design of the Creator was to guard human life against violence. Under the law, blood was forbidden, because it made atonement for sin. It was then sacred; it was appropriated to the service of God. But now, when the consecration is at an end, and the legal sacrifices have ceased, blood is not more sacred than water, and may be used with as little risk of profanation. With all this, however, there is probably no food more unwholesome than blood; and it is true that all civilized, and most heathen men, naturally revolt from using it as an article of food.

21. *For Moses, &c.]* The apostle now proceeds to show the reason of these prohibitions; the connection between this and the preceding verse being as follows:—The customs mentioned are forbidden in the law of Moses, (the five books of Moses, or the Pentateuch,) which has been, and is, constantly read in the synagogues, and which is

22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

23 And they wrote *letters* by them after this manner; The apostles, and elders, and brethren, *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia.

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regarded as binding, both in its ceremonial and moral precepts, and consequently received with the utmost reverence. If, then, the Gentile Christians indulge in these courses, it must necessarily give great offense to the Jewish Christians, and by this means occasion discord in the church. *Of old time*] These sentiments of respect for Moses are not of recent origin, but of long standing, and therefore the more invincible. *Them that preach him*] Publicly proclaim him, by reading his books in the synagogues.

22. *Then pleased it the apostles and elders*] It seemed proper, advisable to them. *With the whole church*] The whole assembly signifying their approbation of the apostolical decree. *Chosen men of their own company*] To give greater weight and authority to the epistle. The Judaizing teachers had come from Jerusalem, and their opinions had obtained more weight on this account, as the church in that city, being under the direction of the apostles, was regarded with great respect by all the other churches. To counteract their influence, two of the chief brethren of the church are sent with the apostolical message to assure the Gentile Christians that the views of Paul and Barnabas were correct—that neither the church in Jerusalem, nor their inspired pastors, held to the opinions of these false teachers, or considered the ceremonial law binding upon them. *Judas, surnamed Barsabas*] Some think this was the same person who was nominated to the vacant apostleship, Acts i, 23; others, that it was his brother. *And Silas*] Who is called Silvanus in the epistles, the former being a contraction of the latter. (See 2 Cor. i, 19.) He afterward became the traveling companion of Paul. Verse 40. *Chief men*] Men of influence. They are called prophets in verse 32, being preachers and rulers in the church at Jerusalem.

23. *Send greeting*] The original word signifies *to be well, to be safe*; a usual form in Greek epistles, another word being understood, and the whole signifying, *I wish thee to be well*. *Which are of the Gentiles*] It is not addressed to the Jews in these churches, because these customs were an abomination to them, and therefore it was unnecessary to warn them against such practices. The decree could only apply to Gentile converts residing among Jewish Christians. "In the

24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law;* to whom we gave no such commandment:

25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul:

26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell *you* the same things by mouth.

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

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apostolical council, the Mosaic law was pronounced not to be binding upon Christian believers; yet, for the sake of peace and harmony, they so far respected the feelings and prejudices of the Jewish brethren as to enjoin the Gentile converts to abstain from certain things prohibited by the law, which things the Gentiles accounted either lawful, or, at least, indifferent; and in which, consequently, they would be apt to indulge to the great scandal and offense of their Jewish brethren."—HOLDEN. *In Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia]* Antioch was the capital of the province of Syria; Cilicia was another province of Asia Minor, lying west of Syria. Through both of these provinces Paul and Barnabas had traveled; and here the difficulties had been most aggravated.

24. *Certain which went out from us]* (See verse 1.) Thus showing that their pretence to have been sent out by the church at Jerusalem, or to express the sentiments of the apostles, was false. *Have troubled you with words]* With their discourses. *Subverting your souls]* The original word signifies, *to pack up anything for removal;* hence, *to remove, to carry off—to plunder.* The sense seems to be here, "removing and perverting your minds (from the truth") by erroneous doctrines.

26. *Men that have hazarded their lives]* A high encomium was this upon the characters of Paul and Barnabas, and the more noble testimony from the fact of its being literally true. (See Acts xiii, 50; xiv, 19.) The apostles thus speak of them to disapprove the assertion of their enemies, and to confirm the confidence that the churches had in them.

28. *For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost]* This is a direct assertion of their inspiration on the part of the apostles and elders in their decision. This had been promised them by our Lord. Matt. xviii, 20; John xvi, 13. *Than these necessary things]* Necessary, in part,

29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication : from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch : and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle.

31 *Which* when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

33 And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.

34 Notwithstanding, it pleased Silas to abide there still.

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from the character of the requirements themselves, as in the prohibition of fornication ; and necessary, besides, from the peculiar circumstances under which they were situated, to avoid exciting the prejudice of the Jewish Christians, and placing a stumbling-block in their way, and thus breaking up the union and harmony of the church.

29. *Ye shall do well]* The original imports, "It will be happy for you"—it will tend to your salvation. It will secure comfort and union, avoid suspicion, evil speaking, and bitterness.

30. *Had gathered the multitude]* That is, assembled the church.

31. *They rejoiced for the consolation]* Which this epistle afforded them by the assurance that they were delivered from the yoke of the Mosaic law, and that this unhappy controversy was settled.

32. *Exhorted the brethren with many words]* Having made the necessary verbal explanations of the decree, they took the opportunity afforded them by the large concourse present, to exhort them at length to faithfulness in Christian doctrine and practice. The early preachers omitted no occasion for preaching the gospel, and exhorting believers to be faithful unto death. *And confirmed them]* Strengthened their faith in the gospel, and in the truths they had received from Paul and Barnabas.

33. *They were let go in peace]* That is, "they departed with peace," with the good wishes and prayers of the church. In taking leave of a person, the customary form of expression was, "Peace be with you." The passage may mean, both were thus dismissed from the assembly, or had liberty to depart, having fulfilled their mission ; but Silas chose to stay a little longer with the brethren.

34. *Notwithstanding, &c.]* Silas probably intending to return to Jerusalem, concluded to tarry awhile behind ; but becoming strongly

35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

36 And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren, in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see how they do.*

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they

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attached to St. Paul, he from this date became his most faithful companion and friend. (See ver. 40; also Acts xvi; 2 Cor. i, 19; 1 Thess. i, 1; 2 Thess. i, 1.)

36. *And see how they do]* In regard to their spiritual state. The active piety of Paul would not permit him to remain quiet. There being many other teachers, he proposes to his beloved Barnabas another tour over the same broad circuit, where they had previously traveled and founded churches, to comfort and build up their spiritual children. The sacrifices and sufferings they had experienced in a former journey formed no obstacle to their repeating it at the call of God.

37. *And Barnabas determined to take with them John]* This was John surnamed Mark, author of the Gospel bearing his name, and nephew of Barnabas. Mark xii, 12, 25; Col. iv, 10. Probably on account of this relationship Barnabas insisted upon his being a companion of their journey contrary to the judgment of Paul. In the work of God it becomes us to know no man after the flesh.

38. *But Paul thought not good to take him]* As he had left them on the former tour, at Perga, to return to Jerusalem, without a sufficient cause, in the estimation of Paul, he preferred not to take him again, possibly lacking confidence in his fortitude and perseverance in the perilous scenes through which he expected to pass. It seems, however, that his unfavorable impression toward Mark was afterward removed, and he "became satisfied as to his being a truly pious and valuable man, and gladly welcomed him to his renewed confidence, and took occasion to speak favorably of him to others." Col. iv, 10; 2 Tim. iv, 11.

39. *And the contention was so sharp between them]* The language is very strong, signifying literally, a paroxysm, or fit of a fever, implying much excitement and opposition of views. Mr. Wesley supposes the sharpness to have been on the part of Barnabas, and not with St. Paul, "who had the right on his side, and maintained it

departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

with love." Dr. Clarke thinks the language does not imply anger or wrong temper, but a strong decision of purpose upon a subject in controversy, concerning which each considered himself in the right, and therefore strenuously insisted upon it; but, at the same time, preserving the same Christian estimation for each other, and feeling no anger toward each other. The most commentators, however, agree in what seems to appear upon the face of the passage, that there was improper heat and impetuosity upon the occasion; that their dispute is a proof of human frailty and infirmity "which cannot be justified, though it admits of extenuation. There was some breach of charity between them; on one side, it may be said that Paul's zeal carried him too far; and, on the other, that Barnabas was too indulgent to his kinsman. This rupture, however, did not end in hatred, as appears from the manner in which Barnabas is mentioned by Paul in his epistles." "The occurrence was overruled for good by divine Providence, in setting on foot two evangelical tours instead of one. Paul and Barnabas, doubtless, amicably agreed to go different ways, and take different companions. They loved one another, and the cause of their common Master, too well to indulge in bickerings, and to try to weaken each other's hands. 'Not ignorant of the devices of Satan,' (2 Cor. ii, 11,) they closed their hearts against a spirit of alienation; and if the 'sharp contention' made an approach to anger, they doubtless did not 'let the sun go down upon their wrath.' Eph. iv, 26. Thus the providence of God overruled the frailties of two such eminent instruments for saving souls to the benefit of the church, since both of them henceforward employed their extraordinary industry and zeal singly and apart, which, until then, had been united and confined to the same place." *Sailed unto Cyprus]* Which was his birthplace, (Acts xiii, 4,) or former residence of Barnabas. The sacred historian takes no further notice of him. According, however, to the statements of ecclesiastical writers, he traveled widely, preaching the gospel. He is reported to have suffered martyrdom in Salamis, the chief city of the Island of Cyprus, at the hand of some Syrian Jews.

40. *Recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God]* Being commended in prayer to the especial blessing and protection of God. A good way to send forth missionaries. Let us still commend those who are now at their posts to the grace of God.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

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41. *Through Syria]* Over his former route. *Confirming the churches]* Building them up in their most holy faith—assuring them of the apostolical decree at Jerusalem, and thus relieving them from the disputes and doubtful controversies introduced by the Judaizing teachers.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

1. Paul circumcises Timothy. 4. Journeys throughout the churches, declaring the decrees of the apostles. 9. Called by a vision to Macedonia. 14. The conversion of Lydia. 16. Casts out the spirit of divination. 19. For this the apostles are arraigned, scourged, and imprisoned. 26. The apostles are miraculously released. 31. Jailer and family converted.

THEN came he to Derbe and Lystra: and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman which was a Jewess, and believed, but his father was a Greek:

2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

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1. *Then came he]* That is, Paul, having Silas as his companion. The inspired historian does not give the history of the tour of Barnabas and John Mark, but relates the circumstances attending Paul's journey. *Derbe and Lystra]* These were cities of the province of Lycaonia, where Paul and Barnabas had preached on a former missionary tour. (See Acts xiv, 6.) *Timotheus]* Also called Timothy; a native of one of these cities; an early convert to Christianity through the preaching of Paul, who therefore styles him his son in the gospel; and who directs to him the two epistles which bear his name. *A certain woman]* Her name was Eunice, as we learn from the Epistle to Timothy. 2 Tim. i, 5. She was a most excellent mother. *Which was a Jewess, and believed]* A Jewess by birth, but had become a Christian, believing on the Lord Jesus. *But his father was a Greek]* He was a Gentile, at most, a proselyte of the gate, having never submitted to circumcision, and therefore had not permitted his son to receive this Jewish ordinance. It seems to have been customary for Jewish females to marry Gentile men, as in the case of Queen Esther, and the Persian king, Ahasuerus; but it was forbidden by their law for Jewish men to intermarry with unbelieving women.

2. *Which was well reported]* This is said of Timothy; he was highly

3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him, because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek:

4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

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estcemed, well spoken of. Though quite young, such had been the successs of a pious mother's instructions and example, that he had already acquired the respect and favorable regard of all who knew him.

3. *Have to go forth with him]* Travel with him as a companion and assistant. *Took and circumcised him, because of the Jews]* The mother, according to the rabbins, had no right to circumcise a child without the father's consent; on this account Timothy had not received this rite, although a Jew on his mother's side. It was no transgression of the decree of the council, or contradiction of the apostle's doctrine in Antioch, to administer this rite to Timothy. The position of the Pharisaic teachers in Antioch and Jerusalem was, that *Gentiles* must *necessarily* become circumcised in order to be saved; while the apostles held that it was *unnecessary*, a burden not to be imposed upon them. If any man, however, had been willing to submit to conciliate the Jews, there would be no sin in such a course. But, further than this, Timothy was by birth a Jew through his mother; he was now to become a traveling preacher among churches where Jews as well as Gentiles were gathered: and, while among the latter, his circumcision would be no offense; with the former, the want of this might hinder the success of the word, and excite their prejudices. Thus says Holden:—"The reason (for this act) is added by the historian, namely, that he might not offend the Jews, who concluded that Timothy was uncircumcised because his father was a Greek, and who would not listen to the doctrine of any uncircumcised person. The decree in the preceding chapter only pronounced circumcision not to be *necessary* to the Gentile converts, but it might occasionally be *expedient*; and though Christians are freed from the yoke of the Mosaic law, St. Paul conformed to it here, and Acts xxi, 20-26, in order to conciliate the Jews, and to promote the success of his preaching, agreeably to the principle laid down in 1 Cor. ix, 19, &c." On the other hand, he did not permit Titus, who was of Gentile birth by *both* parents, to be circumcised, because it was demanded to be done by the false teachers as necessary to salvation. (See Gal. ii, 1-5.)

4. *And as they went through the cities]* The cities of Syria and Cilicia. *They delivered them the decrees]* That is, the decisions of the apostles

5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

6 Now, when they had gone throughout Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia;

7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not.

8 And they, passing by Mysia, came down to Troas.

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concerning the ceremonial law, and particularly the precepts enjoined upon Gentile Christians concerning meats offered to idols, fornication, blood, &c. *For to keep]* To observe, obey. *Were ordained]* Were determined, decided upon.

5. *So were the churches established]* Confirmed in the truth—relieved from perplexing contentions, and built up in holiness. The consequence was, they “increased in number daily.”

6. *Phrygia—Galatia]* Provinces of Asia Minor; in the latter province were many Jews, and, of course, frequent controversies; to assuage these the Epistle to the Galatians was written. *Forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia]* In what way the will of the Spirit was made known is not stated; it may have been by direct revelation, in a dream, or in answer to prayer. They had extensively labored in Asia Minor, and it was now time that the gospel should be preached in more distant places, among a people where the ability and education of Paul fitted him to be eminently useful. *In Asia]* This term denotes that portion of Asia Minor which was called *Proconsular Asia*, of which Ephesus was the capital. It was so called from its being under the government of a Roman proconsul. It was only for the present that Paul was forbidden Asia, as he preached there afterward. Acts xviii, 18; xix, 10.

7. *Mysia—Bithynia]* Adjoining provinces of the same region. *Assayed to go]* Endeavored, attempted. *But the Spirit suffered them not]* Hindered them by some supernatural or providential expression of his will.

8. *Came down to Troas]* This was a small country lying on the west of Mysia, upon the Hellespont, now called the Ægean Sea. It took its name from its principal city, which was a seaport, about four miles from the situation of old Troy, so celebrated in ancient history. It was built by one of the captains of Alexander the Great, and was called by him *Alexandria or Troas Alexandria*, in honor of his master. The Ægean Sea (the ancient Hellespont) is now called the Archipelago, and separates the part of Asia where Paul then was, from the south of Europe.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering, that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

9. *And a vision appeared to Paul in the night]* Probably in a dream, or in a representation made to the senses of the apostle. A Macedonian man appeared before him with a simple and touching request upon his lips, *Come over into Macedonia, and help us.* This vision was accompanied with an undoubted assurance that it was from the Lord. *Macedonia]* This was a large province in the northern part of Greece, having the Ægean Sea upon the east, and the Adriatic and Ionian Seas upon the west. It became renowned in Grecian history through the fame of Philip, one of its kings; and much more so under the arm of Alexander the Great, Philip's son, by whom it became the seat of the third great universal empire. It eventually became a Roman province, in which state it was in the time of the apostles. Thessalonica was at this time its chief capital. *Come over into Macedonia]* Paul must necessarily pass over the Ægean Sea, to reach Macedonia, from Troas, where he then was. *Help us]* How touching the language! They were blind, weak—perishing for the light and support of the gospel; and the servant of God was in possession of means to remedy their miseries. Thus cry to us now the heathen world,—*Come over, and help us!* Come teach us the way of life! Can we resist this appeal?

10. *We endeavored]* This is the first time St. Luke mentions himself in his history; before this, he speaks of the actors in all the events narrated in the third person—*they did thus—but now he presents himself as one of the company—we endeavored—made arrangements, and started for Macedonia.* St. Luke probably joined St. Paul about the same time with Timothy, and became their companion in this journey. *Assuredly gathering]* Confidently judging from these providential events that it was the will of the Lord that they should preach in Macedonia.

11. *Samothracia]* A small island in the Ægean Sea, between Troas and Macedonia; being contiguous to the province of Thrace, it was called Samothracia, or Samos of Thrace, to distinguish it from another Samos in the Ionian Sea. It is now called Samandrachi, and is held by the Turks. *Neapolis]* A seaport of Macedonia, near the borders of Thrace, a few miles west of Philippi.

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, *and a colony*: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*.

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*12. Thence to Philippi]* This was a small city of Macedonia, not far from the borders of Thrace. It was formerly called *Crenides*, from its numerous springs, from which arises a small stream, mentioned in verse 13, though it is commonly omitted in the maps. The name of Philippi it received from Philip, father of Alexander, who enlarged and fortified it as a frontier town against the Thracians. Julius Cæsar sent hither a Roman colony. *Which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia]* Macedonia had been divided into four parts by Emilius Paulus, after it became a Roman province; in the first of these Philippi belonged. *And a colony]* That is, it was a Roman colony. A colony was a district or city either established, and inhabited by Roman citizens, or whither they were sent to reside, and enjoying the rights and protection of Roman citizens. Augustus Cæsar settled here a company of Romans, (the city having been previously made a colony by Julius,) confirming and increasing their privileges. The city was on this account a place of celebrity. It was also distinguished in Roman history; two very important battles having been fought there.

*13. On the sabbath]* The Jewish sabbath. *By a river side, where prayer was wont to be made]* The original may be rendered, with as much propriety, "where, according to (the Jewish) custom, there was a *proseucha*, or *oratory*." The *proseucha* was a Jewish place of worship used where there was no *synagogue*. It was usually a large uncovered building, the seats being arranged in a semicircle, and rising one above another; sometimes a grove or a shady tree afforded such a place for prayer. These buildings were constructed on the seaside, and by the banks of rivers, for the convenience of the purifications and washings, which were customary among the Jews. *Sat down, and spake]* They sat, as did Jewish teachers, and discoursed or preached to the women. *Unto the women which resorted thither]* In the *synagogue* the men and women sat apart in different portions of the building; but as this could not be done in the open *proseucha*, they probably had different hours for their devotions; and the apostles reached the place at the hour the women usually met.

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*: And she constrained us.

16 And it came to pass as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination, met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

14. *Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira]* She seems to have been a resident of Thyatira, a noted city of Lydia, a province of Asia Minor, which was celebrated for the art of purple dyeing, and for the manufacture of purple vests. It was probably not of purple dye that Lydia was a seller, but of purple *vests*. Having manufactured a supply of these in her own city, she seems to have been, at this time, sojourning in Philippi, to secure and attend the sale of them. *Which worshiped God]* She was a devout Gentile, worshiping the true God, being probably a proselyte of the gate. *Whose heart the Lord opened]* By his Spirit, the Lord disposed and prepared the willing and candid heart of Lydia to hear attentively the preaching of Paul. She had already followed the light she had received, and was eager in her inquiries after the will of God. Such persons the Spirit will "guide into all truth." God's Spirit opens and disposes hearts that are not willfully closed and obstinate. (Compare Luke xxiv, 45; 1 Cor. iii, 6, 7; Ezek. xxxvi, 26, 27.) *Attended unto]* Gave careful heed—listened thoughtfully. *The things]* The important truths—the facts relating to Christ and his gospel.

15. *And when she was baptized]* Probably at once upon her professing faith in Christ. This seems to have been the apostolical custom. (See Acts ii, 41; viii, 38.) *And her household]* Her family, implying her husband, her children, and those employed by her. How great an influence, in her family circle, may a pious woman exert, if faithful to her Christian responsibility! *If ye have judged me to be faithful]* "If ye have esteemed me a true believer," and, as such, worthy of baptism. *She constrained us]* Urged us; brought us there by pressing entreaties.

16. *As we went to prayer]* As we went to the *proseucha*, or oratory. *A certain damsel]* A female servant, or slave. *Possessed with a spirit of divination]* The original of the word, translated divination, is *Python*, (having a spirit of Python,) which is one of the heathen appellations of Apollo, one of their divinities—the god of divination,

17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved,

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soothsaying, &c. It came, therefore, to be applied to conjurers, soothsayers, and those who pretended to evoke spirits, or to foretell future events, it being accomplished, as they believed, by an inspiration from Apollo. This woman was regarded as such a person by the inhabitants of Philippi. Some of these *Pythonesses* were ventriloquists, and by their arts imposed upon the credulity of their believers. A few commentators have supposed this girl an impostor of this class; others have esteemed her a lunatic, who fancied, like Joanna Southeote, that she was inspired to foretell future events; but it is evidently the import of the sacred historian, as it is the opinion of most Scripture writers, that she was sincere, and was actually possessed of an *evil spirit*, by whose power she was enabled at times to foretell future events. (See verse 18.) *Her masters]* Possession of a slave in partnership, especially when exercising a gainful trade, was of frequent occurrence. *By soothsaying]* By uttering predictions —telling fortunes.

17. *These men are the servants of the most high God]* This was the truth; but how did she know it? and why was St. Paul grieved at such a testimony? She might have heard Paul or Timothy declare their mission, or have gathered it from the reports of others; but the most probable idea is, that this was the forced testimony of the evil spirit to the truth of the Christian religion as preached by Paul and his companions, as demoniacs had before acknowledged Christ.

18. *Paul, being grieved]* It may be that he feared that her testimony would lead the Jews, who abhorred all magical rites and possessed persons, to believe that the apostles were in compact with demons, and that their miracles were performed through the agency of these evil spirits; while the Gentiles would esteem the apostles to be under the influence of one of their divinities, and, therefore, that there was nothing new or important in their religious teachings. Thus the Saviour forbade the testimony of the evil spirits. Matt. xii, 24; Mark i, 25, 34. Mr. Barnes thus sums up the causes of Paul's grief, and of his subsequent rebuke of the demon:—“1. Because her presence was troublesome to him; 2. Because it might be said that he was in alliance with her, and that his pretensions were just like hers; 3. Because what she did was for the sake of gain, and was a base imposition; 4. Because her state was one of bondage and delusion, and it was proper to free her from this demoniacal possession;

turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew *them* into the market-place unto the rulers,

20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

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and, 5. Because the system under which she was acting was a part of a vast scheme of delusion and imposture, which had spread over a large portion of the pagan world. This was a favorable opportunity to expose the delusion, and to show the power of the Christian religion over all the arts and powers of imposture. The expulsion of the evil spirit would also afford a signal proof of the fact that the apostles were *really* from God." *In the name of Jesus Christ*] By the authority, &c. Note the difference again between the language of Christ and his apostles; the one says, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit," Mark v, 8; the other, "In the name of Jesus," &c. The one is Emanuel—God with us; the other, one of like passions with ourselves—a man.

19. *The hope of their gains was gone*] Being thus dispossessed of the unclean spirit, by whose power she predicted certain events, and established her character as a soothsayer, she could no longer hold her influence over the populace, and, of course, no longer be profitable to her masters. This enraged them. How base thus to prefer gain, even at the expense of the temporal and eternal well-being of another! And are there not some, even at the present day, who forbid their brethren, according to the flesh, the joys of life, and even the hopes of immortality, the more effectually to secure gain from their labors? *Caught Paul and Silas*] Seized upon them. *Into the market-place unto the rulers*] This was a place of public resort, thronged by the multitude, among whom these men might have hoped to excite a tumult against the apostles. Here, too, were the magistrates, and the place where public trials were held.

20. *These men, being Jews*] The whole nation of the Jews were well-known opposers of the idolatry of the heathen, which rendered them odious among all the pagan nations where they resided or trafficked. They thus artfully call out all the prejudice of the people against the Jews to inflame their minds against Paul and his companions. *Do exceedingly trouble our city*] Cause disturbance, excite commotion. The preaching of Paul may have excited inquiry and discussion; but these masters wholly exaggerate the matter. The disturbance had not been so much caused in the public mind as among them-

21 And teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely.

24 Who having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

selves; it was a personal interest that was involved. The apostle had exceedingly troubled their masters in depriving them of their gains.

21. *Teach customs]* Religious duties and practices. *Which are not lawful for us to receive, &c.]* Every man was permitted by the Roman law to worship as he pleased; but to introduce a new religion, and seek to obtain proselytes to it, without public authority, was strictly forbidden. They therefore accuse the apostles of proselyting—teaching unlawful customs, &c.

22. *The multitude rose up together against them]* The trial was public, in the open forum, whither the people had rushed, and they are at once inflamed by this unsustained accusation; the bare fact of their being Jews, being enough to rouse their passions and persecutions. *The magistrates rent off their clothes]* Even the officers of justice, partaking of the excitement of the multitude, commanded the attendants, or inferior officers, to strip off their garments, that they might be scourged upon their naked backs.\* This was probably one instance referred to by the apostle when he said, “Thrice was I beaten with rods.” 2 Cor. xi, 25.

23. *Cast them into prison]* The scourging was but a temporary punishment, ordered to satisfy the tumultuous cries of the populace; they were sent to prison to afford the magistrates an opportunity for further examination and more summary punishment.

24. *Thrust them into the inner prison]* The outer apartments of the jail would not be as safe as the interior, to which access could only be obtained by several gates; subterranean dungeons were often added for further security. Into the securest recess were Paul and Silas thrust. *Made their feet fast in the stocks]* This was a wooden machine, bound with iron, in which the arms and head were sometimes confined; but more frequently, as in this case, the legs and

\* It was usual for the Roman magistrates to command the lictors to rend open the clothes of the criminal that he might the more easily be beaten with rods. No care was taken of the garments on these occasions; but they were suddenly, and with violence, rent open.

25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

feet, the latter being severely bruised by it. Sometimes it distended the legs painfully, so that the situation of Paul and Silas must have been truly excruciating, especially if (as it is very possible) they lay with their bare backs, so lately scourged, on the hard or dusty ground, thus rendering their joyful frame of mind the more remarkable.

*25. Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God]* "Prayer is the natural language of the pious soul, imploring, in its distress, divine assistance and consolation. It was, therefore, an exercise suited to the present situation of these good men, to whom the grace of God was necessary, that they might bear the present trial with patience, and be prepared for the issue of it. But why did they also sing praises to God? Is there anything calculated to inspire cheerfulness in the condition of men whose backs have been torn with a scourge, and whose feet are made fast in the stocks? Do songs accord with the gloom of a prison? A Christian has causes of joy and gratitude independent of external circumstances. Paul and Silas gave thanks to God for the high honor of being called 'to suffer shame for the name of Christ;' for the peace of mind which they enjoyed amid their outward troubles; for the certain knowledge of the love and care of their Redeemer; and for the hope of immortality which raised them above the fear of death. 'God their Maker gave them songs in the night,' which they sung with such devout fervor and animation, that the other prisoners heard them."—DICK. The fact of the other prisoners hearing them is recorded to intimate that they prayed aloud, doubtless in order to testify their consciences to be void of offense, and their joy in the Holy Ghost.

*26. There was a great earthquake]* An entirely miraculous occurrence, caused by the Almighty to testify his approbation of his servants. *All the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed]* The barred prison-gates swing open, and the chains are loosened from the hands of the prisoners, yet, through terror, or by the miraculous agency of God, not one of the prisoners attempts an escape. All these attending circumstances, in connection with the earthquake, seem designed to show the special presence of God, and the divine confirmation of the preaching of Paul. These things evidently affected the magistrates, and induced them to pursue a different course toward them.

27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison-doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas;

30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

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27. *Would have killed himself*] "Every jailer," says Dr. Clarke, "was made responsible for his prisoner, under the same penalty to which the prisoner himself was exposed. The jailer, awakening, and finding the prison-doors open, taking it for granted that all the prisoners had made their escape, and that he must lose his life on that account, chose rather to die by his own hand than by that of others. It was customary among the heathen, when they found death inevitable, to take away their own lives. This custom was applauded by their philosophers, and sanctioned by some of their greatest men."

28. *But Paul cried, &c.*] As it was midnight, Paul knew the intention of the jailer to commit suicide, either by his outeries, or, what is more probable, by a direct suggestion from the Spirit of God, and therefore cried to him to desist.

29. *He called for a light*] Literally, for *light*; that is, for a torch or torches. *Came trembling*] Awed at once by the terrible, natural convulsion; the evident presence of the divine Being, shown by the continuance of the unshackled prisoners in the jail, and by the commanding serenity and dignity of the bleeding and chained religious teachers. The evident attestation of their divine mission awakened his convictions, and a sense of his spiritual danger was gathering increasing weight in his bosom. Trembling with fear, awe, and anxiety, he fell down before Paul and Silas.

30. *And brought them out*] Out of the inner prison. *Sirs*] A title of respect; "the original word not being used indiscriminately in reference to superiors and to inferiors, but was always indicative of respect." *What must I do to be saved?*] That is, in order to obtain eternal salvation. The jailer had doubtless heard something of the doctrines of Paul and Silas, the Pythoness women having asserted that they were "servants of the Most High, showing the way of salvation." The extraordinary circumstances that had just now occurred had convinced him that these men were divine messengers, and he now

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their stripes*; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

therefore asks them what he must do to obtain the salvation they preached.

31. *Believe on the Lord\* Jesus Christ]* Embrace the Christian religion—believe in Jesus, so as to obey him, become his disciple, rely upon him for your salvation, whom we preach, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. *Thou shalt be saved]* Thou shalt thus attain to eternal life. *And thy house]* Supposing, of course, that his family became the disciples of Christ as well as himself, and continued faithful to the end: the meaning being, salvation was offered to his family as well as himself. The faith of a pious father, however, goes far to secure the salvation of his family instrumentally.

32. *They spake unto him the word of the Lord]* That is, explained to him the doctrines of the gospel, showing him more fully how God could be just and yet justify the sinner that believed in Jesus, and explaining the obligations, duties, and rewards, of the disciples of Jesus.

33. *Washed their stripes]* Upon which the blood and the dust had collected, irritating still further their cruel wounds. The apostles excrcised miraulous power to heal others, but meekly submitted themselves to the patient endurance of bodily pain for Christ's sake. *And was baptized, he and all his, straightway*\* Dr. Clarke suggests here, "that if *he and all his* were baptized straightway, immediately, instantly, at that very time, it is by no means likely that there was any *immersion* in the case; indeed all the circumstances of the case, the dead of the night, the general agitation, the necessity of dispatch, and the words of the text, all disprove it. The apostles, therefore, had another method of administering baptism besides *immersion*, which, if practiced according to the Jewish formalities, must have required considerable time, and not a little publicity. As the Jews were accustomed to receive whole families of heathens, young and old, as proselytes, by *baptism*, so here the apostles received *whole families*, those of Lydia and the jailer, by the same rite. It is, therefore, pretty evident that we have in this chapter presumptive proofs:—1. That *baptism* was administered without *immersion*, as in the case of the jailer and his family; and, 2. That *children* were also received into the church in this way; for we can scarcely suppose that the

34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go.

36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.

37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast *us* into prison; and

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whole families of Lydia and the jailer had no children in them; and, if they had, it is not likely that they should be omitted; for the Jewish practice was invariably to receive the heathen *children* with their proselyted parents."

34. *Brought them into his house]* From the prison, into that portion which he occupied as his dwelling. *He set meat before them]* Provided them food. What a change had transpired in the mind of the jailer! A short time before he had thrust them, all bleeding and exhausted, into the dungeon and into stocks, now he affectionately bathes their torn and begrimed backs, and offers them the best his house affords. *And rejoiced, believing in God with all his house]* "How happy was this family! The new convert rejoiced, and so did all his house. 'The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.' There is no joy like that which flows from the belief of the gospel. It purifies while it refreshes the soul; it gives a more elevated tone to the feelings than worldly pleasures can give; it contains no poisonous mixture, which afterward corrodes the heart; it sheds a lustre upon every object, and cheers even the dark hours of adversity; and, in a word, it is permanent, going with us whithersoever we go, accompanying us to death, and springing up within us as 'a well of living water,' in the world to come."—DICK.

35. *The magistrates sent the sergeants]* It may be that the earthquake in the night had some influence upon the magistrates, or information from the jailer, or after the excitement of the moment, upon cool reflection, they became conscious of their most unjust treatment of these men. Without trial, contrary to the Roman law, at the instigation of a riotous multitude, they had scourged and imprisoned them. They therefore send the *lictors*, inferior officers, whose badge of office was a bundle of rods, with an ax in the centre, and who attended upon the magistrates, to secure secretly their release from prison, as the best way to rid themselves of further responsibility about the matter.

37. *Said unto them]* That is, sent this word to the magistrates. *Being Romans]* Being Roman citizens, or enjoying the privileges of

now do they thrust us out privily? nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

38 And the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared when they heard that they were Romans.

39 And they came and besought them, and brought *them* out, and desired *them* to depart out of the city.

40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the citizenship. Paul, either from having derived this right from his ancestors, or from his residence in the free city of Tarsus, was by birth endowed with these privileges; and the sacred penman implies the same to have been the case of Silas. Paul knew the Roman law, and he now properly, and with dignity, makes complaint against the indignities which they had unlawfully received. To scourge a Roman citizen was a crime which subjected the offender to severe punishment; but this had been aggravated by not allowing them a trial, and thrusting them into prison without conviction, both of which were sternly forbidden by the Roman law. By this example we may learn that it is right to appeal to the protection of the laws, and to vindicate our characters with becoming firmness; but having done so, we are to forgive our oppressors, and so far from demanding strict reparation, we ought rather to abate something of our privileges for the sake of peace. *Let them come themselves and fetch us out]* In this way the magistrates would publicly acknowledge the rashness and illegality of their conduct, and vindicate the innocence of Paul and Silas, and the whole community would see that wrong had been done them. "It was, among the Macedonians particularly, a testimony to the innocence of prisoners, if the magistrates should publicly release them from prison."

38. *They feared when they heard]* An insult offered to a Roman citizen was considered an outrage against the whole Roman people, and was, therefore, punished with great severity. The penalty for such an offense was death and confiscation of goods.

39. *Came and besought them]* They were now thoroughly humbled. They acknowledge the impropriety of their course, and beseech them to overlook it. *To depart out of the city]* Not commanding, but requesting them to leave the place, to prevent further tumult, and to save the character of the magistrates themselves.

40. *When they had seen the brethren]* Timotheus and Luke. Lydia's residence in Philippi had, by her request, become their home, and these two brethren were doubtless remaining there in great suspense, awaiting the fate of Paul and Silas. *Comforted them]* By their presence, exhortations, and counsels. *And departed]* Paul and Silas left, but Luke and Timothy seem to have remained behind; they,

*house of Lydia:* and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

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not having become obnoxious to the populace or authorities, could safely and profitably remain behind to confirm the faith of the little church, and strengthen the new converts within the prison walls. "By a comparison of passages, it appears probable that Luke remained in Philippi until Paul returned to this city, on his way to Asia Minor and to Jerusalem. Mention is again made of Timothy in Acts xvii, 14; and from that passage we learn that he was afterward at Berea with Paul and Silas; for Paul left him there with Silas, when he himself preceded to Athens. Perhaps Timothy was left with Luke at Philippi, while Paul and Silas went through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, (Acts xvii, 1,) and then rejoined them at Berea."

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## CHAPTER XVII.

1. Paul preaches in Thessalonica. 5. Persecuted by unbelieving Jews.  
10. Paul and Silas sent to Berea. 15. Paul sent to Athens. 18. Paul's defense upon Mars Hill.

NOW when they had passed through Amphipolis, and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews.

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1. *Amphipolis]* This was the chief city of the first division of Macedonia or Thrace, (now European Turkey.) It was built by Cimon, an Athenian general, four hundred and seventy years before the Christian era; and in the middle ages bore the name of *Chrysopolis*, or *golden city*. It stood on the banks of the river Strymon, which nearly surrounded it, making it a peninsula. From this circumstance its name was derived, *Amphipolis* being compounded of two Greek words, signifying *around* and *city*. There is now a miserable Turkish village situated nearly upon the site of this formerly large and opulent city, called *Embolé*. *Apollonia]* Another city of this part of Macedonia, situated between Amphipolis and Thessalonica. It received its name from the heathen deity, Apollo, to whom a splendid temple was here erected. It is at present called *Erisso*. *Thessalonica]* A large and populous city and seaport of Macedonia. It was situated on the Thermian Bay, and was anciently called *Thermæ*; but being rebuilt by Philip, the father of

2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures,

3 Opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

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Alexander, after his victory over the Thessalians, he gave it this name. At the time Paul visited this city it was the residence of the Roman proconsul, who governed the province of Macedonia. Besides being the seat of government, this city carried on an extensive commerce, which caused a great influx of strangers from all quarters, and the city became celebrated for the number, learning, and wealth of its inhabitants. The Jews were especially numerous here. The modern name of the place is *Salonichi*; it is the chief port of modern Greece, having a population of some sixty thousand, twelve thousand of whom are Jews. *Where was a synagogue of the Jews?* This fact may have been stated here, as the Jews might not have had synagogues in the surrounding cities, but simply *proseuchas*, or places for prayer, as in Philippi, Acts xvi, 13; but here, the number and the wealth of the Jews secured for them a regular house of worship.

2. *As his manner was*] A Jew himself, and a teacher also, he found ready admission into the synagogues, now scattered throughout all the Roman empire. This gave the early Christian missionary a great advantage in his work.

He first unfolds and expounds the salvation of the gospel to his brethren according to the flesh, and watches his opportunities for conveying the same important information to the Gentiles, assisted by those of the Jewish synagogue who believed. *Three sabbath-days*] Paul undoubtedly remained longer in the city; but lectured no longer in the synagogue. *Reasoned with them out of the Scriptures*] That is, he founded all his arguments in favor of the Messiahship of Jesus upon the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which they held to be divine. He *discoursed* to them from the sacred Scriptures, of Jesus and his gospel.

3. *Opening*] Bringing out to the light, clearly and truly illustrating. *Alleging*] That is, affirming, from the considerations already presented. *That Christ must needs have suffered, &c.*] For this, as we have before seen, (Acts ii, iii,) was a great objection in the minds of the Jews to Jesus, they believing that when the Messiah came, he would conquer all his enemies; and the idea of suffering and death was repugnant to all their conceptions of his glorious and kingly character. This became, therefore, a main point in the argument of the apostles—to prove that, according to the Scriptures which they

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas: and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also;

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received as inspired, the Messiah, when he came, must suffer all these indignities, even the cruel death which he experienced, but then be gloriously raised from the tomb again. This they affirmed to have been true of Jesus whom they preached.

4. *Some of them]* The Jews—members of the synagogue. *Consorted with Paul and Silas]* “Joined themselves to,” “took their lot with,” became their adherents. *Devout Greeks]* That is, inhabitants of Thessalonica, who had become, in part at least, already proselytes to the Jewish religion, and had renounced their idolatry. *Chief women]* Women of high standing in society in the city, who, having embraced Judaism, now embraced Christianity.

5. *Moved with envy]* Jealous of the success of Paul and Silas in obtaining converts to the gospel. *Certain lewd fellows of the baser sort]* Vile, ill-disposed persons. The original term for *lewd fellows* denotes men who wickedly *idled* away their time in public places, similar to those now meant by the term *loafers*. By the *baser sort* were meant the very dregs of society—a mob of the vagrant, vicious, and idle frequenters of the market-place. *Gathered a company]* Collected a mob. *Set all the city on an uproar]* By their tumult and outrageous proceedings. *Assaulted the house of Jason]* Here probably Paul stopped. From Rom. xvi, 21, it appears that Jason was a relative of Paul. *Sought to bring them out to the people]* That is, to a popular assembly for examination. The word *people* does not refer to the mob that was filling the city with confusion, but to a regular assembly of the citizens, before whom the accusations of the unbelieving Jews might be laid.

6. *When they found them not]* Probably having escaped privately to another house. *Unto the rulers of the city]* The Roman magistrates of the city. *These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also]* This is the language of exaggerated passion. The term *world* is used in the popular sense, and the sum of the charge is, These mischievous men, who have excited commotion wherever they have been, have now come to disturb and trouble us also.

7 Whom Jason hath received : and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying, that there is another king, *one* Jesus.

8 And they troubled the people, and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

9 And when they had taken security of Jason and of the other, they let them go.

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither*, went into the synagogue of the Jews.

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7. *Whom Jason hath received*] Permitted to lodge in his house, entertained them cordially. As Paul and Silas have escaped, they attempt to visit upon Jason the persecution intended for them. They make him accountable for their sin, because he harbored them. *These all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar*] They infringe upon a law of the Roman emperor. *Saying, that there is another king, one Jesus*] The Roman emperors suffered none in the provinces under their government to assume the title of *king* without their permission. These persons confounded the spiritual office and kingdom of Christ with a temporal dominion. The apostles had presented Jesus as the royal descendant of David, now establishing a universal empire; but these Jews understood their meaning, for this same Jesus had been crucified, and was no longer upon the earth. They seek to impose by this specious charge upon the ignorant multitude, and the loyal magistrates, as the Jews in Jerusalem had attempted to secure the condemnation of Jesus himself, by such a charge before Pilate—accusing him of being a king, and thus a rebel against Cæsar.

8. *And they troubled the people, &c.*] There seems to have been no particular opposition on the part of the magistrates and people to the apostles;—but these open accusations of their own nation, of seditious courses, filled them with anxieties. The people were *agitated, confused*, and the magistrates dreaded a public tumult.

9. *Taken security of Jason*] That is, Jason and those with him gave security, satisfaction, either by his assurance, or by a deposit of money, that no seditious movements were contemplated; that Paul and Silas should leave the city, or that they would again appear for further examination at any appointed time before the magistrates.

10. *The brethren*] Of the little church, lately formed of the believing Jews—Jason and others. *Immediately sent away*] To avoid, probably, personal injury from the Jews and the excited multitude. *Unto Berea*] A city of Macedonia, a short distance south-west of Thessalonica.

11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul, to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

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11. *These were more noble]* Not in a worldly sense, but better disposed, more ingenuous and liberal minded. *With all readiness of mind]* Cheerfully, without prejudice; eager to obtain instruction, and to welcome the truth. *And searched the Scriptures daily]* Literally, they sifted out, &c.; alluding to the process of separating wheat from chaff. They were Jews and Jewish proselytes; they, therefore, possessed the Scriptures of the Old Testament: to these the apostles appealed for proofs of the Messiahship of Christ, and to them the noble Bereans turned to see if these things were really so. "From the conduct of the Bereans we may infer, first, the duty of studying the sacred Scriptures; and, secondly, the obligation to exercise our reason in matters of religion; for they heard the apostles with candor, yet would not embrace their doctrines without due examination and inquiry."

12. *Many of them believed]* Candid examination rarely ever fails to produce such a result. The Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments lead directly to Christ. Some of the bitterest enemies of Christianity have acknowledged that they have never read the inspired records of its origin; but those who have made themselves the most familiar with the Scriptures have arisen from their study with the firmest confidence in their inspiration, and the divine origin of Christianity. *Honorable women]* (See verse 4.)

13. *Stirred up the people]* Excited opposition among the populace by false accusations. How cruel and malicious was this course! Not satisfied with the injury done these men of God in Thessalonica, they no sooner heard of the friendly disposition of the Bereans to them, than they hastened to arouse public prejudice and clamor against them.

14. *To go as it were to the sea]* As our translation reads, it would seem as if his going to the sea was a *feint* to deceive his enemies as to his real course, while he secretly crossed the land to Athens. But the original would have been more properly translated, "Sent Paul to go toward the sea." To avoid the opposition of the Jews, which

15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens : and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

16 Now, while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

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might follow him from one city to another, if he had crossed the country to Athens, those attending him may possibly have taken him to the neighboring seaport, Pydna, and sailed with him round the coast to Athens. The general belief, however, is that he passed the whole distance by land. *Silas and Timotheus abode there still*] Timotheus had been left at Philippi with Luke, when Paul and Silas left that city ; but he seems shortly after to have rejoined Paul and Silas at Berea. Silas and Timotheus are again left behind to comfort and build up the infant church, Paul being the principal object of the late persecution ; the labors of the other brethren were probably in a measure overlooked by their Jewish persecutors.

15. *Athens*] Athens was the chief city of ancient Greece, one of the most renowned cities in the world, and the great seat of ancient arts and sciences. It was the birthplace of the most eminent men of antiquity ; the resort of philosophers ; and was noted for the learning and valor of its inhabitants, and the great elegance of its public buildings. It is situated upon a gulf of the Ægean Sea ; and the ruins of its former magnificence still remain. It is now the seat of government of the modern Greek empire ; but its miserable hovels of poverty sadly contrast with the fallen massive pillars that once adorned the majestic temples of the Grecian divinities. The Turkish followers of Mohammed, in A. D. 1456, swept over the cities of Greece, with their desolating bands, murdering the inhabitants, and defacing the beautiful works of art. Athens remained in their hands until 1829, when the present government was established through the interposition of the European powers. American missionaries have been sent to Athens ; and their voices have been heard in the same streets where Paul walked and pondered upon the idolatry of the inhabitants, proclaiming the same God, and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Receiving a commandment*] Bearing back a message.

16. *His spirit was stirred in him*] The sympathies and anxieties of his heart were deeply moved. The sight of their folly and blindness, and the knowledge of the consequences that must follow, moved his heart to its centre with pity for them, and zeal to preach to them the truth as it is in Jesus. *Saw the city wholly given to idolatry*] Or, as it is very properly expressed in the margin, *full of idols*. This was true in point of fact. The Athenians had prided themselves upon the number of

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange

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their deities, and had introduced them from all parts of the world, supposing that the more numerous their divinities, the more sure were they of protection. Thus one of their own writers assures us, that Athens had more images than all the rest of Greece; and another remarks, that "it was easier to find there a god than a man."

17. *Therefore disputed]* Discussed, presented, and defended the claims of Jesus to be the *Christ*, in the synagogues, and before the *devout persons*] The Grecian proselytes, who had already embraced Judaism—and disputing or arguing with the idolatrous Athenians upon the true religion as distinguished from their false worship, wherever he could obtain access to them. *In the market]* In the forum—a place somewhat similar to our *exchange*; a general resort for men of business and leisure, where people assembled to converse, hear lectures, learn the news, &c. There were many of these places in Athens; and among them was this one in particular, in the most populous part of the city, and near to the place where the Stoic philosophers used to hold their discussions. Probably in this forum Paul held some of his controversies with the polished and learned, but idolatrous philosophers and curious inquirers of Athens.

18. *Certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics]* "These were two celebrated sects of Grecian philosophers, both of whom held opinions very inconsistent with the doctrines of St. Paul. The Epicureans acknowledged no gods, except in name only, and absolutely denied that they exercised any providence over the world. The Stoics professed to believe both in the existence of the gods and their providence in the world; but they attributed all human actions to fixed and unalterable fate, to which they conceived the gods themselves to be subject; and thus destroyed the foundation of all religion as much as the atheistical Epicureans did."—BISHOP PEARCE. *Encountered him]* Entered into discussion with him. *This babbler]* Literally, *a collector of seeds*; being the name of a small bird that lives by picking up seeds by the road. The word came to be applied to busy bodies, who spent their time in picking up the sayings and doings of others without order or method, and retailing them again to those they met—the word, therefore, means, an empty-headed prater—a mean, impertinent, and incorrigible talker. *A setter forth of strange*

gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears; we would know therefore what these things mean.

21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there,

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*gods]* An announcer, or a proclaimer of foreign deities, gods not hitherto known and worshiped in Athens. Paul preached Jesus, and presented the only and true God, and the blinded Greeks inferred that they were probably two Jewish deities of whom they had not before heard. *Jesus, and the resurrection]* The latter being the most convincing attestation of the Saviour's divine mission.

19. *Brought him unto Areopagus]* More properly to Mars-hill, as the Greek word Areopagus means, and as it is translated in verse 22. The celebrated Athenian court, called the court of Areopagus, from the place where it was held, had its session in an appropriate edifice upon this hill. The hill was an elevation in the west part of the city, near to the Acropolis, or citadel of Athens, commanding a good view of the chief part of the city, and was used as a place of public assembly by the Athenian people. It is uncertain whether Paul was immediately carried before the grave and noted tribunal of the Areopagus, or whether the discussion in the market place was adjourned to the more commodious summit of Mars-hill, where the multitude could have a better opportunity of hearing the apostle more fully expound his novel views of religion. The latter idea seems to be confirmed by the facts, that no formal accusation appears to have been made against Paul, and no process of trial introduced, and that Paul in his address makes no defense against specific charges, but makes a statement of his peculiar religious opinions in contradistinction to their irrational idolatry. Some of the members of the Areopagus, as Dionysius, might, however, have been present on the occasion. Verse 34.

20. *Thou bringest certain strange things]* Literally, "things which strike us with surprise"—unheard of—astonishing. *What these things mean]* We desire an explanation of them.

21. *For all the Athenians, &c.]* This character of the Athenians is fully confirmed by heathen writers. "They were remarkable for spending time in places of public resort, for learning and telling the news, and for light conversation. There were no fewer than three hundred and sixty places in the city where people of the lower orders were in the habit of meeting one another for conversation; while the

spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an

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more respectable classes had also their places of resort for the same purpose."—RIPLEY. *Strangers which were there]* Foreigners who had come to Athens for purposes of business, or education, or pleasure. The city was thronged with these.

22. *Stood in the midst of Mars-hill]* He stood in the midst of the assembly, gathered in the court of the Areopagus on Mars-hill. *Ye are too superstitious]* How true was this remark, and how well adapted to secure their attention! The Athenians were noted for the multitude of their religious observances. But Paul showed that they "worshipped" them "knew not what." The apostle then noticed the occasion which led to his addressing them, (the sight of the altar to the unknown God;) and showed that it was his desire to enable them to satisfy their wish of worshiping even *unknown gods*, by pointing out that *great Being* who is the *only and the true God*, some of whose chief attributes, and the various benefits he hath wrought, Paul then proceeded to recount. From thence he inferred the *duty* incumbent on God's creatures of seeking, that is *worshiping*, him; at the same time noticing erroneous modes thereof, which had originated in utter ignorance of his true nature. This introduced an exhortation to *abandon* these errors, fortified by an announcement of a future day of judgment and punishment for all willful disobedience to the will of God. Thus forcibly and wisely did the great apostle of the Gentiles introduce and develop the only true religion in the hearing of this idolatrous, proud, and educated people.

23. *Beheld your devotions]* The word translated *devotions*, does not mean attendance upon religious services, sacrifices, &c., but rather the *objects of worship*, such as temples, images, altars, &c. *To the Unknown God]* Heathen writers assure us that there were altars addressed to no particular deities, and that there were others inscribed to unknown and foreign gods. Among these, the apostle found one bearing the above remarkable inscription. There can be no doubt of its existence, for the testimony of the apostle is sufficient; its origin and purport, however, are matters of doubt and conflicting opinions. "The most probable is, that it was erected on account of some great benefit received, which the Athenians attributed to *some god*, though it was uncertain to *whom*. It may possibly have been the God of the Jews,

altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

24 God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25 Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

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to whom reference was had by the persons who dedicated this altar. By stating that he declared this God, whom they worshiped ignorantly, without knowing him, St. Paul refuted the charge of being a setter forth of strange gods." *Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you]* Not asserting that this altar was intentionally dedicated to the true God, though they were ignorant of his character. But as the fact was known to all, that an altar existed in the city inscribed to the unknown God, he makes it the occasion of enabling him, without committing the offense of introducing new divinities or a new worship, to call their attention to one, indeed unknown to them, who was the only true God.

24. *God that made the world]* In presenting the true God to them, he took occasion to notice indirectly some of the false views of the Greeian philosophers, who believed the matter of the earth always to have existed, and to have come into its present form by chance, or perhaps under the supervision of different deities. He asserts its creation to have been the work of God. *Dwelleth not in temples made with hands]* As did the images of their gods. The Being who had constructed a temple so vast and illimitable could not be confined to the narrow boundaries of the edifices erected by his own creatures.

25. *Neither is worshiped with men's hands]* "Neither is he worshiped or served by the works and offerings of men's hands, as though he needed anything they can make or do, seeing that he is himself the great Author and Giver of 'life, and breath, and all things.'" This was a rebuke of their costly sacrifices, their offerings of food and incense; all these things belonging originally to him.

26. *And hath made of one blood]* Hath caused all nations to descend from one man—made them of one race. This was another rebuke to the pride and prejudice of the Athenians. They believed they were of a superior race in their origin, having, according to their view, sprung, at first, out of the soil of Attica, while other nations had obtained possession of the countries they inhabited by invasion or con-

27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

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quest. *For to dwell on all the face of the earth]* He created man to people the whole globe; but originated all the different nations and people, which, in his providence, he scattered over the earth, from one parent, that there might be a universal bond of brotherhood and sympathy. This is a great and instructive truth: when it is fully embraced by individuals and nations, all bloody wars will cease, and unity and peace universally prevail. *Hath determined the times before appointed]* That is, the times of the rise and fall of the different nations of the earth. They lie in his hands; the period of their existence as nations has been definitely determined by the supreme Intelligence of the universe. *And the bounds of their habitation]* The limits, the boundaries of their different territories upon the earth.

27. *That they should seek the Lord]* This the apostle asserts was the intended result of the divine goodness; that by all these merciful providences, exhibited in placing them in goodly habitations, giving life and breath, they might be induced through these manifest works to seek and worship their Creator. *If haply]* If perhaps. *They might feel after him]* As a man groping, bewildered, in the dark, feeling his way along; so they, although benighted, if they had carefully crept along in the direction of the glimmering light of nature which they enjoyed, might have made the discovery of the true God. *Though he be not far from every one of us]* That is, the difficulty of finding him consisted not in his being at so great a distance from them, but in the darkness of their minds; for God, by his Spirit, is everywhere present, and always with us. The sincere seeker cannot long *feel* after him without making the happy discovery of his gracious presence.

28. *For in him we live, and move, &c.]* So near to us is he, and so dependent are we upon him, that "he is the very source of our existence: the principle of life comes from him; the principle of motion also comes from him, one of the most difficult things in nature to be properly apprehended; and a strong proof of the continued presence and energy of the Deity." *Have our being]* "And we are." We live in him, move in him, and are in him; our existence every instant being dependent upon him. By him we are what we are. *As certain also of your own poets]* The poet quoted to is Aratus, a Cilician, and a countryman of Paul. (Compare Col. i, 16, 17; Heb. i, 3.)

29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent:

Cleanthes also, a Stoic philosopher and poet, in a noble hymn to Jupiter, the chief of the heathen gods, introduces the same idea. The following is the first stanza of an excellent version of it by Dr. West, a learned English writer, as quoted by Ripley in his Notes:—

“O, under various sacred names adored !  
Divinity supreme ! all-potent Lord !  
Author of nature ! whose unbounded sway,  
And legislative power, all things obey !  
Majestic Jove ! all hail ! To thee belong  
The suppliant prayer and tributary song ;  
To thee from all thy mortal offspring due,  
From thee we came, from thee our being drew ,  
Whatever lives and moves, great Sire ! is thine,  
Imbodyed portions of the soul divine.”

This language, applied by the Grecian poet to their heathen deity, the apostle, with great tact and effect, applies to the true God. *For we are also his offspring]* Showing their close and intimate relation to God; their poets had spoken of them as the offspring, the children of God—sustained by him, as the child is by the constant care and attention of the parent. Thus Dr. Clarke translates a quotation from Aratus:—

“Jove's presence fills all space, upholds this ball ;  
All need his aid ; his power sustains us all.  
*For we his offspring are* ; and he in love  
Points out to man his labor from above.”

29. *Forasmuch then]* The apostle now sums up the results of his preceding argument. Since we are his offspring, and are continually dependent upon his power for our life and happiness, he cannot be a lifeless, unintelligent block of gold, or silver, or stone, fashioned by human art. He must be a living, intelligent, powerful, omnipresent Spirit. He is, therefore, not to be worshiped by idolatrous forms, and through senseless images, as did the Athenians, but by the Spirit, in a spiritual manner.

30. *And the times of this ignorance]* Although this ignorance of the true God was willful, and they might, by feeling after him, have found him, but had wickedly extinguished the light of the Spirit, Rom. i, 20, 23; and when they knew God, worshiped him not as God, until their foolish hearts were darkened, yet God mercifully forbore

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by *that man* whom he hath ordained: *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*

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toward them. *God winked at]* God overlooked, or bore with, heathen ignorance; did not punish it with its due severity. *But now commandeth all men everywhere to repent]* He forbore, because no direct and immediate revelation of his will had been made. But now the great divine Teacher had appeared, for whose coming many of the Grecian philosophers had been looking, and who, they expected, would give them important light on the character of God, true religion, and the future state of man. This instruction he had given through him; God now, as Creator, commanded all men to repent of their former idolatries and sins.

31. *Because he hath appointed a day, &c.]* Fixed the period. The apostle here adduces another and solemn reason for obeying the command of God; not only on account of his mercy in providence, his long forbearance, and his present revelation of light in the gospel of Christ, does he exhort them to repent, but in view of the judgment to come in the future world, when they will be held strictly accountable for all their privileges and light. *Judge the world in righteousness]* A Hebraism for "will judge the world righteously," that is, with perfect justice, meting to all their reward or punishment, according to their opportunities. *By that man]* Jesus Christ. *Whom he hath ordained]* To be the judge on this august occasion. *Whereof he hath given assurance]* Hath given testimony or evidence. *In that he hath raised him from the dead]* That is, Christ's resurrection was a proof that God could raise the dead, and it was also a divine attestation that Jesus Christ was what he represented himself to be, the Son of God, who would judge the world at the last day. Acts x, 42; Matt. xxv, 31.

32. *When they heard of the resurrection]* The apostle was doubtless intending to proceed further in his discourse, unfolding the gospel of this glorious Saviour, whose mission had been so wonderfully attested by his being raised from the dead, but the assembly rise up in confusion. This doctrine—the resurrection from the dead—was so contrary and abhorrent to their views of the destiny of human beings, even if they existed after death, that they meet the assertion as if it had been too extravagant and wild for consideration, and beyond their patience to endure. *Some mocked]* Ridiculed the idea; probably

33 So Paul departed from among them.

34 Howbeit, certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

the most ignorant and lowest class of those present. *We will hear thee again of this matter*] The better part of his hearers expressed their dissent from his views in a more courteous manner. Not that they cared to hear him further, but politely hinted to him to close his discourse, or made a civil apology for leaving, not relishing his doctrines.

33. *Paul departed from among them*] From the assembly on Mars-hill.

34. *Clave unto him*] Joined themselves to him, became his adherents. *And believed*] His word, and in Jesus Christ as a Saviour. *Dionysius the Areopagite*] A member of the court of the Areopagus, and, on this account, a man of eminence, learning, and integrity, or he would not have been found in this venerable court. Eusebius relates that he became a distinguished Christian preacher in Athens, and died a martyr's death; but full credence cannot be given to these traditions. *Damaris*] Nothing more is known of her. Probably she was a lady of some eminence, and from the higher class, from her name being singled out from the others.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

1. Paul departs for Corinth, and preaches there, supporting himself by his trade. 9. The Lord encourages him in a vision. 10. Is arrested, and carried before Gallio; but is dismissed without trial. 18. Sails to Syria, and journeys through the churches. 24. Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, begins to preach with much success.

AFTER these things, Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

1. *After these things*] The circumstances related in the preceding chapter. How long Paul remained in Athens it is impossible to tell; Dr. Clarke thinks not less than three months: but finding little progress to be made among them by his labors, he leaves for other more favorable scenes. *Corinth*] A most distinguished city of Greece, and second only to Athens. It was very favorably situated, west of Athens, between the two gulfs, Lepanto and Egina, the one opening into the Aegean Sea, on the east, and the other into the Ionian Sea, on the west. Its extensive commerce was carried on by two sea-

2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, (because that

ports, one at the head of each gulf, Lechæum at the west, and Cenchrea at the east. Her commerce enriched her with wealth; but led her inhabitants into luxury and dissoluteness. The city was adorned with the most magnificent temples, theatres, and porticoes, enriched with the beautiful columns which are now distinguished in architecture by the designation of Corinthian. The arts and sciences were here carried to such perfection that Cieero terms it "the light of all Greece;" and schools of philosophy and rhetorie, taught by able masters, abounded. Strangers resorted hither for instruction from all quarters; but the *honor* which this renowned city derived from the learning of its philosophers was dimmed by the dissoluteness of their manners. A knowledge of this will throw light upon St. Paul's exhortations in 1 Cor. vi, 9, 10, and his defense of the Christian doctrines against the Sophists, by whose means contentions had been introduced into the church at Corinth. The city was destroyed by the Roman consul, Mummius, B. C. 146; but was rebuilt by Julius Cæsar, who made it a Roman colony, and capital of the Roman province of Achaia; and it rapidly increased in size and splendor, and held its ancient position when visited by St. Paul. The present state of Corinth exhibits a melancholy contrast to the splendor of its early days. Some years ago it contained four or five mosques within its castle, and five or six small churches, which were mostly ruined. The town is a heap of ruins, and the inhabitants are few and poor. "It is an interesting consideration," says Latrobe, "that, amid all the changes to which Corinth has been subjected since St. Paul's sojourn there, it has ever retained a profession of the faith of Christ; and although 'the church of God, which is at Corinth,' is at present of smaller extent than it had been at any previous period of its history, the thought is, at least, gratifying, that the only place of worship now attended by its inhabitants is dedicated to the service of the same Lord, who appeared by night unto the apostle, and said, 'I have much people in this city.'"

2. *A certain Jew named Aquila]* Whether Aquila was a professed Christian at this time or not, is not stated. Dr. Clarke supposes that he may have been converted while Paul abode with him; but the general opinion is, that he had been converted at Rome, where a church had been very early formed by the returning Jews from Jerusalem, who, at the Pentecost, had been powerfully converted to a belief of the gospel. Aquila is a Roman name; and it was customary for Jews who resided in foreign cities to take a name adapted

Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome,) and came unto them.

3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought, (for by their occupation they were tent-makers.)

to the language of the country. Both Aquila and Priscilla, his wife, are honorably and affectionately mentioned by the apostle for their zeal in the cause of Christ. *Pontus]* This was the north-eastern province of Asia Minor, lying upon the southern coast of the Black Sea. Under Mithridates the Great this country had been one of the most powerful enemies of Rome; but it was at length subdued by Pompey, and became a Roman province. Many Jews resided here. *Acts ii, 9;* *1 Peter i, 1.* *Italy]* The country of which Rome is the capital, in the south of Europe. *Claudius]* Emperor of Rome, who reigned from A. D. 41 to 56; mentioned also in *Acts xi, 28.* *Had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome]* This decree of Claudius is confirmed by the Roman historian Suetonius, who attributes it to the continual disturbances among the Jews themselves. "He expelled the Jews from Rome," says he, "as they were making continual insurrections under their leader *Chrestus.*" Some commentators have supposed that Chrestus was an Hellenistic Jew, who was an instigator and leader of disturbances; but the best-founded opinion is, that under this title *Christ* was signified. These tumults were probably the result of religious discussions and dissensions between the Jews and the Christians, (whether Jews or Gentiles.) "As in Antioch, Lystra, Thessalonica, Berea, so in Rome, the bitterness of the unbelieving Jews had driven them to extreme measures against the disciples of Jesus. In these difficulties, the name of the Saviour would, of course, be repeatedly employed in such a manner as that a Roman historian might easily mistake it for the name of a living leader. These disputes leading to a disturbance of the public peace, the emperor issued his decree for ridding the cities of its disturbers. In such a decree the Jewish Christians would be included, as really as other Jews, because the Romans made no distinction at that time between the two companies, regarding them, probably, as rival sects of the same religion. Aquila and Priscilla afterward returned to Rome, *Rom. xvi, 3;* the decree having respect, perhaps, to a limited time, or being afterward revoked."

3. *Because he was of the same craft]* Because he practiced the same trade. It was customary among the Jews, whatever might be their wealth, or the education and profession of their children, to have them taught some mechanical trade, so that they might support themselves by manual labor, if a necessity for it should occur during

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews, *that Jesus was Christ.*

6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, *Your blood be upon your*

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*their lives. And wrought]* Labored with his hands. *They were tent-makers]* And this would be a profitable employment, from the great demand for tents for military and domestic purposes. These were made of skins or of thick cloth; and as inns throughout the East are rare, they were necessary for all travelers; and for many served for dwellings during the heat of the summer, and even throughout the year.

4. *He reasoned in the synagogue]* Argued that Jesus was the Christ; proved from the Old Testament the truth of his gospel. *Persuaded the Jews and the Greeks]* That is, endeavored to persuade or convince them. By the Greeks, may be meant proselytes to the Jewish religion, or inhabitants of Corinth, attracted to the Jewish synagogue to hear Paul; probably the former.

5. *When Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia]* They had been left in Berea of Macedonia, when persecution had driven Paul out. *Paul was pressed in the spirit]* There is some difference in opinion whether this means that Paul was oppressed in spirit, and filled with the deepest solicitude for the unbelieving Jews and heathens around him, and anxious to find openings to introduce the gospel among them, or that he was constrained by the Spirit of God, and so powerfully urged to preach, that he could not resist. Either sense is appropriate, and even both may be included in it. Some read the passage, "Paul was pressed with the word," that is, zealously occupied in preaching it. *And testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ]* With more than his former fervency; perhaps ceasing from his daily business, after the arrival of Silas and Timotheus, he gave himself up to the work of zealously preaching Christ as the Messiah and only Saviour.

6. *When they opposed themselves, and blasphemed]* Set themselves in an attitude of hostility against the truth, and reviled the apostle and his doctrine, as the Jews had treated the Saviour himself when upon the earth. *He shook his raiment]* A common symbolical action, signifying that he renounced all further dealings with them; it was a similar act to the shaking the dust from the feet, it being a solemn and expressive protest against their unbelief and obstinacy. (See Acts xiii, 51.) *Your blood be upon your own heads]* Or rather, "your

own heads: I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshiped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house: and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized.

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blood is upon your own heads," that is, the perdition which you will incur by rejecting the gospel is solely owing to yourselves. *I am clean]* I am pure of it; the blame is not to be imputed to me, as I have faithfully warned you of the consequences of persisting willfully in your unbelief. *From henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles]* Of course this was limited to Corinth; and the meaning is,—as you have rejected and reviled the gospel I first offered to you, according to the injunction of Jesus Christ, and thus shown yourself unworthy of it, during the rest of my stay in Corinth I shall spend my time principally in obtaining access to the Gentiles, and in preaching to them. Acts xiii, 46.

7. *He departed thence]* From the synagogue, where he had used the language found in the preceding verse. *Named Justus, one that worshiped God]* The language seems to show that Justus was a Jewish proselyte; whose mind had received light from the teachings of the apostles, and whose heart had been opened to receive the doctrines he taught. *Whose house joined hard to the synagogue]* His house was contiguous to, adjoining the synagogue. Paul retired hither, because of its nearness, and perhaps on account of its conveniences for accommodating those that might follow him from the synagogue to hear him expound still further the blessed truths of the gospel.

8. *Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue]* An officer of high importance and respectability among the Jews; for he was their presiding officer, and enjoying all the powers of a judge in cases of conscience and in criminal matters. His conversion was a galling loss to the Jews, and a source of joy to the apostles and infant church. He is mentioned, in 1 Cor. i, 14, as one among the few that Paul personally baptized. *With all his house]* Became Christians by faith in Jesus as their Saviour, and by the consecration of the younger members in the act of baptism; another instance of the reception of a family into the church of Christ. *Many of the Corinthians hearing]* The natives of the city, Gentiles, hearing the preaching of Paul, he having left the Jewish synagogue, and seeking opportunities to congregate and address the heathen inhabitants of the city.

9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee, to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

11 And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment-seat,

13 Saying, This *fellow* persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

9. *Then spake the Lord]* The Lord Jesus Christ thus miraculously appears to confirm the faith of the apostle, and strengthen him to continue his zealous labor, unmoved by the revilings and obstinacy of the Jews and Gentiles.

10. *For I am with thee]* (See Matt. xxviii, 20.) *No man shall set on thee, to hurt thee]* That is, thou shalt suffer no bodily attack; though reviled, no one shall assail thee to cause personal injury. *For I have much people in this city]* Those who will be converted hereafter through the labors of Paul and others, are called the Lord's people by anticipation. As if he had said, There are many who will embrace my religion; the present, "I have," being used to denote the certainty of the event. Among the most unpromising subjects of grace, oftentimes, the richest triumphs of the gospel are exhibited. We should never limit the power of God, or become discouraged by unpropitious circumstances.

12. *When Gallio was the deputy of Achaia]* Greece had been divided by the Romans, when they conquered it, into two principal divisions, Macedonia and Achaia, of which the last was the most southern, and had Corinth for its capital. Each province was governed by a *proconsul*; and this office Gallio now entered upon, the term deputy in the text not clearly expressing his official position. He was brother of Seneca, the celebrated Roman moralist; and the historians of his time represent him as of a peculiarly mild and amiable temper, and of exemplary morality. *The Jews made insurrection]* Raised a tumult, made an assault, seized Paul, and bore him to the judgment-seat, or tribunal of the proconsul. Probably thinking the new officer would be more likely to accede to their clamor, in order to win their submission to his authority, or expecting to accomplish their purposes on account of the known easiness and accommodating spirit of Gallio, they appear before him with the apostle.

13. *This fellow]* Expressive of the utmost disrespect. *Persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law]* That is, contrary to the law of

14 And when Paul was now about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

15 But if it be a question of words and names, and *of* your law, look ye *to it*: for I will be no judge of such *matters*.

16 And he drove them from the judgment-seat.

17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment-seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

Moses. The Jews throughout the Roman provinces were permitted to practice their peculiar religious rites according to the Mosaic institutes. Their charge amounts to this: "The Roman people permit us Jews in Greece to worship God after the rites of the Mosaic law; but this fellow teaches things contrary to our law, and excites disturbances among us."—BLOOMFIELD.

14. *Was now about to open his mouth*] To commence his defense. *If it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdness*] Gallio seeing at once that there was no criminal charge brought against Paul, but that a matter of religious difference only existed between the Jews and the apostle, and not properly coming before his tribunal, he dismisses it at once, saying, "If it were some *injustice*, or wicked misdemeanor, (of which you accuse him,) it would be reasonable that I should bear with you," that is, patiently hear what you have to say.

15. *But if it be a question of words and names*] *Of doctrines*; or whether the individual named Jesus be the true Messiah. *And of your law*] Or if it is for a transgression of your own ecclesiastical law. *Look ye to it*] Let it be settled among yourselves. It is *out* of my jurisdiction as a civil ruler, and I will have nothing to do with it.

16. *He drove them, &c.*] He dismissed the complaint, and ordered them away.

17. *Then all the Greeks*] The multitude—the rabble of Corinth—drawn together to listen to the trial. *Took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue*] Sosthenes had probably succeeded to this office after Crispus, who had previously held it, became converted to Christianity. He also became afterward a disciple of Christ. 1 Cor. i, 1. *And beat him before the judgment-seat*] He may have appeared as the principal accuser in behalf of the Jews; and the multitude, indignant at the unnecessary disturbance of the public peace made by the Jews, and the malignity they seemed to exhibit against Paul, gave vent to the common prejudices against the Hebrew race, by striking Sosthenes with their fists as he passed out from the judgment-hall before them, being expelled from the tribunal. *Gallio cared for none of those things*] *Gave himself no concern about them*. Perhaps as the accusation

18 And Paul *after this* tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla, and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he

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had seemed to him so trivial, and such an exhibition of sectarian bitterness on the part of the Jews, and as the beating was probably nothing more than the striking him with their fists as he passed out, Gallio thought it best not to interfere. Both Romans and Greeks despised the Jews, and on this account this exhibition of mutual disdain might not meet with his expressed disapprobation. It was the policy of the Roman authorities to humor the peculiar vices and prejudices of the nations they conquered, in order that they might bear more quietly the yoke of subjection.

18. *Tarried there yet a good while]* The open opposition of the Jews being thus summarily ended, he had a better opportunity to preach Jesus and him crucified, especially to the Corinthians. Dr. Clarke supposes he remained here about two years. *Sailed thence into Syria]* Being on his way to Jerusalem. *Having shorn his head in Cenchrea]* It is difficult, if not impossible, from the passage to determine whether this refers to Aquila or Paul; the majority of commentators, however, apply it to the latter. There is as much uncertainty about the *occasion* and *nature* of this vow. This is well known, that it was customary among the Jews and others, in seasons of sickness and peril, or when any temporal good was most earnestly desired, to vow, as a token of gratitude, the offering of the hair (which was highly prized) to God, the shaving of which denoted the fulfillment of the vow. Cenchrea was the seaport of Corinth on the east, and was eight miles distant.

19. *And he came to Ephesus]* This was the metropolis and principal mart of proconsular Asia, and was situated on the river Cayster, near the western coast of Asia Minor. It was renowned for its wealth and magnificent temple dedicated to Diana. It afterward became the seat of a large and flourishing Christian church and bishopric, but is now a heap of ruins—a monument of the frailty and vanity of human glory. In 1826, when visited by Rev. Mr. Hartly, “corn was growing in all directions amidst the forsaken ruins; and *one* solitary individual only was found who bore the name of Christ; instead of its once flourishing church, where assembled thousands exclaimed, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians,’ now the eagle yells, and the jackall moans.” *Left them there]* Left Priscilla and Aquila. “Paul had brought them with him, on his voyage to

himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they desired *him* to tarry longer time with them, he consented not:

21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

22 And when he had landed at Cesarea, and gone up and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

23 And after he had spent some time *there*, he departed and went over *all* the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

24 And a certain Jew, named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, *and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Cesarea, as far as Ephesus, and then put them on shore; and the ship stopping there a short time, *including a sabbath-day*, Paul took the opportunity of preaching to the Jews, to whom his discourse was so acceptable that they pressed him to remain longer with them; which request, however, he was obliged to refuse, because if he permitted the ship to go without him, he would probably not be able to meet with another to convey him in time for the feast at Jerusalem."

—BLOOMFIELD.

21. *I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem*] The sense being, "I must spend the feast here;" that is, it is my purpose so to do. The approaching feast was probably the passover; and the probable cause of Paul's anxiety to be there was not that he felt it an incumbent duty to celebrate the feast there as a Jew, but as there would be a great gathering of Jews from all parts of the world, it would give him a most favorable opportunity to preach Christ, and also of meeting many Jewish Christians who would come up to the beloved city on this occasion. *If God will*] If it is in accordance with his providence. A beautiful example of submission to the divine disposition of events.

22. *Landed at Cesarea*] Cesarea in Palestine, a convenient seaport to Jerusalem. *Gone up and saluted the church*] At Jerusalem—expressing to them his continued and affectionate regard. *Went down to Antioch*] In Syria; from whence he had started on his second missionary tour. Acts xv, 36–40.

23. *Departed and went over all the country, &c.*] Commenced his third apostolical tour.

24. *At Alexandria*] A city in the north of Egypt, on the Mediterranean, built by Alexander the Great, and formerly enjoying great renown for its wealth, learning, and public buildings. It was the

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord: and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom, when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the bre-

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residence of numerous Jews. *An eloquent man]* Probably educated in one of the noted rhetorical schools of Alexandria, and having an easy utterance and an impressive manner. *Mighty in the Scriptures]* Having diligently studied the Scriptures, and become familiar with their contents, he was ready and forcible in their use—"well versed in the interpretation of the Scriptures of the Old Testament."

25. *Was instructed in the way of the Lord]* As far as he could be by the ministry of John the Baptist, or one of his disciples. He had been taught the doctrine of a Messiah, and to expect his early advent. He had not as yet learned that he had actually come. *Being fervent in the spirit]* Being full of zeal, and ardent in his feelings. *Knowing only the baptism of John]* The doctrines preached by John, of which the baptism of repentance formed an important part. These he promulgated with great ardor. Whether he obtained his knowledge of the truths that John taught, on a journey that he might have taken during the Baptist's ministry to Jerusalem, or from one of John's disciples, who had wandered as far as Alexandria, and with whom Apollos had formed an acquaintance, we do not know; probably the latter was the case.

26. *Whom, when Aquila and Priscilla had heard]* While tarrying in this city they improved the opportunity offered by the synagogue worship for listening to the inspired word of God, and of preaching Christ, the Messiah, to the Jews gathered there. They heard with great interest, undoubtedly, the zealous preaching of Apollos, and saw how important it was that he should be fully instructed in the gospel. *Expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly]* The divine plan of salvation. They opened and explained the gospel of the Son of God, testifying that Christ had already come according to prophecy, and had been crucified, and had risen again, and thus opened the way of salvation for guilty man. A proper example this for experienced and advanced Christians: an exhibition of a most teachable spirit is here given by the young preacher Apollos.

27. *And when he was disposed to pass]* Eager to spread the light he received, he seems to have been traveling from place to place. Now having acquired most important instructions, his heart yearns to spread the knowledge of the Messiah in other places. *Achaia]* This

thren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace.

28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, *and that* publicly, showing by the Scriptures, that Jesus was Christ.

was the province of Greece, of which Corinth was the capital, where Priscilla and Aquila had lived, and where the young church needed his eloquent labors to draw in the unaffected multitudes who had not as yet paid attention to the truths that Paul had delivered. *Wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him]* The brethren of Ephesus wrote to the brethren of Corinth in favor of Apollos, and praying them to receive him kindly. *Which had believed through grace]* Through divine grace or favor. This may refer to the gracious assistance given to those who believed, enabling them, in a saving manner, to trust in Christ, or to the divine assistance bestowed upon Apollos. As if it had read, "Through the grace of God, he helped or profited them who had received the faith."

28. *For he mightily convinced the Jews]* He reasoned with great power, and with arguments that were unanswerable—he *powerfully refuted* all their objections to Christianity, and convinced many. *Showing by the Scriptures, &c.]* Proving from the received word of God that Jesus was the true Messiah.

## CHAPTER XIX.

1. Paul at Ephesus. 3. John's disciples become believers, and receive the Holy Ghost by the hands of Paul. 12. Paul preaches two years, and performs miracles there. 14. The seven sons of Sceva. 18. Many believe, and burn their magical books. 24. Demetrius the silversmith, and the great disturbance in Ephesus, concerning the goddess Diana.

AND it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples,

1. *While Apollos was at Corinth]* The capital of Achaia, whither Apollos had journeyed from Ephesus. *Upper coasts]* That is, through Phrygia and Galatia, which lay further in the interior, and at the north of Ephesus, higher up, as the map shows, from the Mediterranean and Ægean Seas, than Ephesus, which was situated upon the sea-coast. *Finding certain disciples]* These persons seem to have been in the same situation as Apollos. Acts xviii, 24. Either having attended upon the preaching of John, and received baptism

2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

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by him some twenty-six years before this, or having been instructed and baptized by one of John's disciples, they believed in a Messiah about to come, not having heard of the advent and crucifixion of the Saviour, or the gospel of the kingdom preached. They were devout and pious persons, "waiting for the consolation of Israel."

2. *Have ye received the Holy Ghost?*] That is, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, as appears from the sixth verse. In the early period of the church's history, both for its defense and success, we have seen that true believers were not only endowed with the spiritual graces of the Holy Ghost, but also with miraculous gifts and powers. *Since ye believed?*] Paul addresses them, being a company of devout men, as if they had professed faith in the Saviour; they had indeed believed in his coming. *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost?*] This evidently does not refer to the existence and ordinary operations of the Spirit, as being pious Jews, they could not be unacquainted with these; but they had not heard of the extraordinary descent of the Holy Ghost at the feast of pentecost, or of the miraculous endowments bestowed upon believers. They had not heard that the Holy Ghost was restored to Israel, who, according to the saying of the rabbis, departed from it after the death of Zechariah and Malachi. In like manner, it is said, on a certain occasion, of Samuel, who had been trained up in the fear of God from his infancy, and was then ministering in the tabernacle, that "he did not yet know the Lord;" that is, we learn from the words which immediately follow, he had not yet been favored with any vision or revelation. John, when relating an address of our Saviour to the Jews in the temple, remarks, that "the Holy Ghost was not yet given;" or, according to the original, that "the Holy Ghost was not yet," because Jesus was not yet glorified; undoubtedly meaning, not that the divine Spirit did not then exist, for he had spoken many ages before by the prophets, but that he was not then poured out upon the disciples in those spiritual gifts which were so abundantly communicated after the exaltation of Christ. Thus these disciples had not heard of the dispensation of the Spirit.

3. *Unto what then were ye baptized?*] Unto what faith or doctrine were ye baptized? What did ye profess to believe? For if they had been baptized by a Christian teacher, it would have been in the

4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

5 When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

7 And all the men were about twelve.

8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them,

belief of the Father, and of the Son, and of the *Holy Ghost*. *Unto John's baptism]* Unto repentance, and the reformation of life, as a preparation to receive the Messiah when he appeared. Matt. iii.

4. Paul now calls their attention to the chief object of John's baptism, to prepare them for the Messiah's approach; and undoubtedly, in a discourse not recorded, enlarges upon the evidences of the Messiahship of Jesus Christ. The language of the apostle here imports,—"Now that Messiah, whom John bound you to receive and worship, is Christ Jesus."

5. *They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus]* Convinced by the arguments of the apostles, they immediately believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and were baptized in his name.

There is no precedent found here to justify the rebaptism of those who have once been baptized in the name of the adorable Trinity; for these persons were not Christians, but pious Jews, and had never received *Christian* baptism.

6. *The Holy Ghost came on them]* In his gracious fullness, and with his miraculous gifts. *And they spake with tongues, and prophesied]* They received the gift of languages, and exercised that gift in preaching Christ. Acts xiii, 1; xv, 32.

8. *Disputing]* Arguing. *Persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God]* Striving to convince them of the truths relating to the gospel dispensation, and attempting to induce them to seek the "kingdom of God and his righteousness," the spiritual reign of Christ over the believer's spirit.

9. *When divers were hardened]* When some obstinately refused to yield their belief. *Spake evil of that way]* Reviled the gospel plan of salvation, slandered the apostle, and the truths he taught. *Departed from them]* Ceased in his attendance upon the synagogue. *And*

and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs, or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

*separated the disciples]* Who, with him, had also worshiped in the synagogue. These he takes with him, lest the continued contentions of the Jews might disturb their religious enjoyments, and provides another place of worship. *Disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus]* Whether a religious teacher or a philosopher, a converted Jew or a Gentile, is not known; and commentators differ in their opinion. It seems most probable, however, that he was a schoolmaster, or teacher of rhetoric, of Ephesus; whose school-room or hall Paul obtained for his public services, when he found it necessary to leave the synagogue.

10. *And this continued by the space of two years]* That is, he taught during this period in the hall of Tyrannus; but from his first coming to his departure from Ephesus, was three years. Acts xx, 31. *So that all they—in Asia heard the word]* This may be used in a limited sense, or refer to proconsular Asia, or Ionia, of which Ephesus was the metropolis, and to which, for purposes of traffic, or to worship at the famed shrine of Diana, the inhabitants of the province continually flocked. Through these, the knowledge of the gospel, heard by them from Paul, in Ephesus, would be spread throughout the country.

11. *Special miracles]* Of no ordinary kind—extraordinary miracles.

12. *So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs, &c.]* In this the special character of these miracles appeared. Ordinarily the apostles were present when a miracle was performed; but here a seeming virtue or healing power, as in the case of our Lord, appeared to issue from his body, and was conveyed through the medium of handkerchiefs and aprons to the distant sick, and healed them. It was not that there was healing virtue in his person, but the Holy Spirit chose this way of exercising its healing energy, that the multitude might see that there was no collusion or previous management between Paul and the persons who were healed. The Romanists consider that this passage favors their belief in the virtue of the relics of deceased persons, and their power of working miracles.

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

14 And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered, and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

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But few of these persons, whose bones or garments they preserve as so precious and efficacious, (if indeed they *are* authentic relics of these persons, concerning which there are more than serious *doubts*,) ever wrought miracles *when they were alive*; certainly their garments or bones, when they are dead, will not possess greater power than was vouchsafed to living saints. The New Testament records no such occurrence. These are the idle tales of lying priests to obtain the superstitious respect of an ignorant multitude, and to fleece them of their wealth, for the covetous treasury of the pretended successors of the self-sacrificing apostles.

13. *Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists*] That is, a strolling company of Jews, who traveled about from place to place, pretending to cure diseases and demoniacal possessions, by magical arts and incantations. That the Jews pretended to exorcise devils, or to cast them out, not only by invocation of the name of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but by skill in magic, we learn from Josephus, who mentions having seen one Eleazar before Vespasian, delivering them who were possessed with evil spirits, drawing forth the devil from the nose, by putting a ring to the nose of the possessed person, having in the seal of it an incantation prepared, as he asserted, by Solomon, and pronouncing an adjuration to the spirit to come forth. They also had books of enchantment, and modes of exorcising demons, composed, as they pretended, by Solomon.

These mountebank magicians, seeing the success of Paul in healing the sick and possessed, through the name of Jesus Christ, and the confidence of the multitude in the apostle, determined to make a trial of his name in their incantations, and thus continue their hold upon the multitude, and increase their gains. *We adjure you*] We solemnly command you, sanctioned by an oath in the name of the Jesus preached by Paul, to come out of the man.

14. *Sceva—chief of the priests*] Among these impostors were the seven sons of a Jew, who either was, or had been, a chief priest—that is, at the head of one of the classes into which the priests were divided.

15. *Evil spirit answered*] By the voice of the demoniac; evidently

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus: and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds.

19 Many also of them which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all *men*; and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver.

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it was not the possessed man himself, as the language would have been impossible in his case; for what had he known of Jesus and Paul? *Jesus I know, and Paul I know, &c.*] I recognize the authority of Jesus and of Paul, but not yours; ye have no authority over me.

16. *And the man in whom the evil spirit was*] Here the presence of a distinct and powerful demon is seen. If he had been diseased simply, and subject to weakening convulsions, how could he have prevailed against *seven* strong young men? Certainly here was supernatural strength. *Naked and wounded*] The term naked, in the New Testament, generally refers to the removal of the upper garment, and not an entire destitution of clothing. The demoniacs stripped off their coats or mantles, and beat and bruised their bodies, until they were forced to fly, leaving their upper raiment behind, to save their lives.

17. *Fear fell on them all*] At such an evident exhibition of the weakness of these magical arts, and the divine judgment brought upon these exorcists by their blasphemous use of the name of Jesus. *The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified*] The evil spirit had audibly acknowledged his authority; and among this people, given to such superstitions, so startling a confirmation of the extraordinary power of Jesus could not but produce a deep impression.

18. *Confessed, and showed their deeds*] Made a frank and open acknowledgment of their sins, especially of their magical practices; the late events have quickened their convictions, and prepared them to hear the doctrines of Paul with more eagerness and profit.

19. *Curious arts*] Magical practices and incantations. *Brought their books*] Of enchantment—treatises on magic and dreams. Ephesus was the chief resort of the professors of the black art, who drew up certain incantations or magical sentences, called *Ephesian letters*; these were written upon parchment, and bound to the body, being used as *amulets*. *Burned them*] To exhibit the sincerity of their re-

20 So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed.

21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia, and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; *but* he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.

24 For a certain *man* named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;

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nunciation, and to prevent their doing any further injury by misleading others. *Fifty thousand pieces of silver*] If the Jewish shekel is here meant, the sum would be \$28,000; if the Roman drachma, \$7,000; if the Attic coin, \$7,700.

20. *So mightily*] Powerfully. *Grew the word*] Increased the prevalence of the gospel. *And prevailed*] Overcame all obstacles.

21. *After these things were ended*] The incidents just related. *Purposed in the spirit*] In his own mind; that is, resolved. He determined upon the route he should take in his next itinerant journey. *I must also see Rome*] Not as a curious traveler, but as an apostle of Christ, to comfort and build up the church there. Rom. i, 10, 13; xvi, 23. His design of visiting Rome was accomplished, but in an unexpected way. He was taken prisoner in Jerusalem, and carried bound, as a criminal, to Rome on appeal to the emperor.

22. *So he sent—Timotheus and Erastus*] On his tours, for assistance, and to leave in important positions, the apostle usually took with him companions. These he now sends on before, intending soon to follow. Erastus is here mentioned for the first time; and he appears to have previously been a public officer either at Ephesus or Corinth. He is called the *chamberlain* in the epistles. (See Rom. xvi, 23; 2 Tim. iv, 20.)

23. *No small stir about that way*] No little excitement and tumult now arose concerning the religion of the apostle—the gospel way of salvation.

24. *Which made silver shrines for Diana*] Diana was a goddess extensively worshiped by the heathen nations of antiquity. She was the impersonation of nature, the “mighty mother of all things;” and was generally represented as a female figure, and with a great number of breasts; and covered with, and surrounded by, animals of all descriptions. She was regarded as the goddess of hunting, traveling,

25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth:

26 Moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying, that they be no gods which are made with hands.

27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at naught; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshipeth.

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enchantments, of births, health, &c., and was thought to preside over all these interests. Thus she had a large number of worshipers. The temple of Diana at Ephesus was considered one of the seven wonders of the world. It was built by the contributions of all the Asiatic states, and occupied two hundred and twenty years in building; such an immense amount of stone was used in its construction that the quarries of the country were said to have been exhausted by it. Its length was four hundred and twenty-five feet, and its breadth two hundred and twenty feet. The shrines referred to were miniature temples, made of silver, after the same model as the larger temple; and these were furnished with small images of the goddess. As these shrines were thought to protect their possessors, and to obtain for them the especial regard of the goddess, they were in great demand, and afforded a very lucrative business for the silversmiths of Ephesus. *The craftsmen]* The silver workers, the artisans.

25. *With the workmen of like occupation]* To swell the multitude, he gathered not only the wealthy master workmen, but all the laborers in their shops, and those whose business also interested them in the same cause—such as those engaged in statuary, painting, &c. Their wealth alike depended upon the continuance of this idolatry.

26. *Hath persuaded and turned away much people]* Persuaded to renounce idolatry, and turn away from the service of images. This work had been general, as was made evident by the decrease of their trade. The strangers from all parts of Asia, now visiting Ephesus, no longer sought silver shrines to bear back to their homes as worshipers of Diana. When the gospel of Christ generally prevails, *all unholy traffic* must come to an end. Thus has it been with the slave-trade, and thus will it be in reference to the sale of intoxicating drinks.

27. *Whom all Asia and the world worshipeth]* It was not so much on account of the goddess, or a depreciation of the magnificence of

28 And when they heard *these sayings*, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

30 And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.

31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends,

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the temple, that Demetrius felt so anxious about the success of Paul, but because his craft was in danger. How often has religious pretension been made a cloak to cover the most mercenary designs! He exaggerates the reverence paid to the goddess; he flatters their pride in this extravagant assertion of the general interest and respect exhibited toward their goddess and her temple.

28. *Full of wrath*] Greatly enraged against Paul, and full of passionate zeal for their goddess.

29. *Having caught Gaius and Aristarchus*] To give some direction and point to the tumult, and to inflame their rage, by the presence of some of the obnoxious Christians, they lay their hands upon these two pious companions of the apostle. *Rushed—into the theatre*] Among the Greeks, the theatre, the proper appropriation of which was for the celebration of the public games, was also used as a place of assembly for every kind of public business; serving at once for town-hall, senate-house, forum, and for harangues to the people. It has been observed, that the very situation of the theatre at Ephesus would not a little promote and increase the tumult, as it is found, from the accounts of those who have surveyed the situation of the temple of Diana, that it was within view of the theatre.

30. *When Paul would have entered in unto the people*] To defend himself and the religion he preached; not willing that his companions should suffer in his stead. Paul was of too noble a spirit to fly while his friends were in danger, and chiefly on his account. *The disciples suffered him not*] Fearing that the multitude, in their present inflamed state, might immediately take his life, which was now peculiarly important to the infant church.

31. *Certain of the chief of Asia*] In the original, *certain of Asiarchs*; so called from the province over which they presided: others being called Syriarchs and Bithynarchs, from their respective countries. These were chosen annually, from the most distinguished and wealthy families, to preside over the religious rites of their province, and over other public affairs; and were bound, at their own expense, to exhibit every year solemn games in the theatre, in honor of the gods and of the emperor. Those who had served in the office, continued, out of

sent unto him desiring *him* that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defense unto the people.

34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

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courtesy, to have the title still bestowed upon them. "In the account, by Eusebius, of Polycarp's martyrdom at Smyrna, the people are represented as calling upon Philip the Asiarch, to let out a lion upon that aged disciple, which he refused to do, telling them that the games were ended. From this it seems that it belonged to the Asiarchæ to permit the wild beasts to be produced against particular persons; and we may conjecture that it was in fear lest the infuriated mob should call upon them to let forth the wild beasts against Paul, that they desired him not to appear in the theatre."—*Pictorial Bible*.

33. *And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward]* It is generally supposed that this was the same Alexander, the coppersmith, who caused the apostle so much trouble, and who excommunicated him. 1 Tim. i, 20; 2 Tim. iv, 14. He appears to have been thrust forward by the Jews, who, willing to join in the outcry against the Christians, and fearing lest they themselves should be included in the general clamor, as they were known to be opposed to the idolatries of the Gentile nations, press him forward to speak in their defense, laying all the blame on Paul and his followers. Alexander was probably a proselyte of the gate, and capable of speaking with ease in a public assembly. The better class of those present, desirous of quelling the confusion, seeing a Jew thus thrust forward as if to speak, and perhaps considering him one of the disciples of Paul, about to defend himself, draw him forth into a convenient place for addressing the multitude. *Would have made his defense]* Not a personal defense, but an apology for the Jews, exculpating them from fault, at the expense of the Christians.

34. *But when they knew that he was a Jew]* Against whom they were equally prejudiced, and who were known to be unfriendly to image worship, and probably confounded with the Christians as only different sects of the same religion. So they drowned his efforts to speak with their ceaseless clamor.

35 And when the town-clerk had appeased the people, he said, *Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshiper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?*

36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.

37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

35. *When the town-clerk]* Literally, the scribe. It is easier, says Bloomfield, to determine the rank and duties of this office than to represent the term by any corresponding word in our modern languages. From ancient writers, it appears that he was *president of the senate*, and that he performed most of the duties of a *chief justice* and *secretary of state*. He may have been called scribe from being the keeper of the public archives, containing public documents, such as treaties, decrees, &c. He was, undoubtedly, the highest officer of the town. He may not have been present at the first gathering of the crowd, and his presence, and commanding office and voice, served to calm the multitude. He shows great wisdom and decision in the course he pursued. *Ye men of Ephesus]* He shows them that their continued protestations were needless, for everybody knew they were worshipers of the goddess Diana, and therefore there was no need of rash and hasty counsels; the accused persons had not yet diminished the attachment of the city to her deity. Besides, these men appeared to be harmless; and if they had infringed upon the rights of any one, the civil tribunal was open for Demetrius or any one else to make his charges. Lastly, they were laying themselves liable to serious consequences by such insurrectionary movements. *Is a worshiper]* The Greek word is applied to cities or states which were devoted to the worship of a particular deity. It was customary for cities to select a divinity as their especial protector, and they paid particular regard and worship to this chosen god. Diana was the divinity of Ephesus. *And of the image which fell down from Jupiter?]* This was the feigned report of the pagan priests: the time of the formation of the image and its maker being lost, no one could contradict the fable, and greater reverence was thus secured in its behalf.

37. *These men]* Gaius and Aristarchus. Verse 29. *Robbers of churches]* That is, of temples. *Nor yet blasphemers of your goddess]* They had not reviled, or used scurrilous language against Diana. They had preached Jesus and the only true God, but had dealt in no invectives against any particular deity. They had enlightened the

38 Wherefore, if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

39 But if ye inquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.

40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

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minds of their followers, and these had of their own accord cast off all their idolatries.

38. *The law is open]* In the margin it reads, "The court days are kept" for attending to such complaints; then is the proper time for such a charge to be tried, and not in the public theatre, before the multitude. *And there are deputies]* Proconsuls; the Roman provincial officers, who were the proper judges of such cases. *Let them implead one another]* That is, institute legal proceedings.

39. *Concerning other matters]* Not appropriate to a civil court. *In a lawful assembly]* Literally, in *the lawful assembly*. Let a public meeting be called by the constituted officers of the town; the authority to summon extraordinary meetings to consider public affairs resting with the officers of the city. The secretary more than hints that the gathering at this time was illegal. Three days every month, also, were appointed to hear such cases.

40. *For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar]* By the Roman proconsul. The Roman laws being very severe toward rioters, the offense being punished with death. *There being no cause]* No sufficient cause for such a tumultuary movement, as a fire, an invasion, an inundation, or anything of that nature, which the Roman law considered sufficient justification for a sudden concourse of people. But there was no such cause here.

## CHAPTER XX.

1. Paul goes to Macedonia. 3. Sails again for Syria. 6. Comes to Troas; preaches all night. 9. Eutychus falls from the window, is killed, and brought to life by Paul. 17. Reaches Miletus, sends for the elders of Ephesus, and addresses them. 32. Commends them to God, and leaves them in tears.

AND after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto *him* the disciples, and embraced *them*, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,

3 And *there* abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

4 And there accompanied him into Asia, Sopater of Berea;

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1. *After the uproar was ceased]* The tumult excited by Demetrius. This evidently induced Paul, probably at the suggestion of the brethren, to leave Ephesus somewhat sooner than he intended, as the prospect of doing good was obstructed by the inflamed state of the community. *Embraced them]* Bade them farewell with his usual affectionate embraces.

2. *Had gone over those parts]* The cities and districts of Macedonia, as he had previously determined. (See Acts xix, 21.) *Came into Greece]* That is, into Greece proper, or Achaia; lying south of Macedonia.

3. *Laid wait for him]* Laid in ambush to seize him. *He purposed to return through Macedonia]* His purpose seems to have been to embark from a port in Greece for Syria on his journey to Jerusalem; but learning of the plot of the Jews to waylay or attack him on ship-board, and probably to kill him, as Dr. Clarke supposes, to obtain the money collected throughout the churches for the poor saints at Jerusalem, he altered his plan, and traveled back to Macedonia, and from thence to Troas, where he embarked for Syria, thus disappointing their malignant intentions.

4. *And there accompanied him into Asia]* Original, *as far as Asia*. In the fifth verse it is said that the companions of their journey preceded them to Troas, so that they could not have accompanied them *into Asia*; but they went with them to Philippi, the last town in Europe visited in their journey, and they immediately proceeded to Troas in Asia, while Paul and Luke tarried awhile behind; so that it might be properly said that they accompanied them *to Asia*; or as

and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

5 These going before, tarried for us at Troas.

6 And we sailed away from Philippi, after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

7 And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, (ready to depart on the morrow,) and continued his speech until midnight.

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*far as Asia Sopater of Berea]* Probably the same as Sosipater, a kinsman of Paul. Rom. xvi, 21. *Aristarchus]* (See Acts xix, 29.) *Gaius of Derbe]* Of Asia Minor. In Acts xix, 29, we read of Gaius of Macedonia; they may be the same persons, Gaius being born in one place, and a resident of the other. *Tychicus]* An intimate and esteemed friend of Paul. Eph. vi, 21, 22; Titus iii, 12. *Trophimus]* (See Acts xxi, 29; 2 Tim. iv, 20.)

5. *Tarried for us]* Paul and Luke, the latter of whom may have remained in Philippi until the present time, (since Paul left, after he and Silas were miraculously liberated from the prison, Acts xvi,) practicing his profession as a physician, and building up the church; but upon the return of Paul to Philippi again, he once more becomes his traveling companion and speaks as an eye-witness of the events that follow.

6. *After the days of unleavened bread]* After the passover, during which unleavened bread was eaten seven days. Acts xii, 3. The feast is mentioned here to mark the period, or the time of the year, when they embarked: just as we say, after Christmas or New-Year. The feast commenced with the new moon, in April.

7. *Upon the first day of the week]* That is, upon our sabbath; which, it appears from this, had been before this set apart and consecrated to divine worship, and to the administration of the gospel ordinances.

*To break bread]* To partake of the Lord's supper. They probably received, as this intimates, the sacrament of the Lord's supper every sabbath. *Preached—ready to depart on the morrow]* How eager to improve every moment in doing good! He seeks no rest preparatory to his tedious journey; but is in labors more abundant. *Continued his speech until midnight]* Probably not a set discourse; but the time, perhaps about six hours, allowing for the interruptions, was passed in answering questions upon the doctrines and practices of the disciples, Paul being the chief speaker. The circumstances were pecu-

8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him, said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

liar, and justified this laborious night. The apostle had but a short period to remain with this infant church, and many things were to be set in order.

8. *And there were many lights]* For reasons of obvious convenience and propriety.

9. *Sat in a window]* They had at this time no windows of glass. The place where the young man sat was near a *lattice*, or opening in the wall, to let in light and air, the door being left open on account of the heat caused by the numbers who were there, and the many lights. These apertures reached usually to the floor, and often were built out from the building, and overhung the street. *From the third loft]* The third story. *Was taken up dead]* Not in a swoon, or *for* dead, as some suppose, but with life *entirely extinct*, from his great fall upon the pavement below. No other sense can be applied to these words without doing injustice to the account of St. Luke.

10. *Paul—fell on him, &c.]* As Elisha did on the Shunamite's son. 2 Kings iv, 33, 35. *Trouble not yourselves]* No doubt great anxiety had been felt and manifested by the company assembled. Paul bids them cease to be anxious. Such a death might have offered too good an opportunity for the enemies of the gospel in Philippi to raise a tumult against the Christians; this may have caused, in part, the trouble of the audience. *Life is in him]* That is, it has returned to him again.

11. *Broken bread, and eaten]* Not the Lord's supper. This probably had been attended to before. But Paul himself, fatigued and hungered by his long address, took food preparatory to his journey. *Talked a long while]* That is, conversed familiarly on religious subjects, not in regular set discourse.

12. *And they brought the young man]* To his home.

13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.

14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene.

15 And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogylgium; and the next day we came to Miletus.

16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

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13. *We went before]* Luke and the other companions of Paul, who had preceded him to Troas. Verse 4. *Assos]* A maritime city of Mysia, south of Troas. *Minding—to go afoot]* Perhaps because the distance by land was so much shorter and less tedious, and to afford opportunities for doing good on the route.

14. *Came to Mitylene]* A seaport, and the capital of the Island of Lesbos.

15. *Over against Chios]* A celebrated island south of Lesbos, now called Scio. *Samos]* Another noted island in the Ægean, still further to the south-east, and near the province of Lydia. *Trogylgium]* This was a town situated upon a promontory of the main land nearly opposite Samos, and not in the island, as the text would seem to imply. *Miletus]* A seaport town near the mouth of the river Meander, thirty miles south of Ephesus. It was noted for its magnificent temple of Apollo. The place is now in ruins, and is called Melos by the Turks.

16. *Had determined to sail by Ephesus]* Not to touch there with the ship, as he was in such haste to reach Jerusalem; he had, therefore, passed by Ephesus, but he desired to see once more the officers of the church, and give them all necessary instructions, as he had been admonished by the Spirit that he would not enjoy another opportunity. *To be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost]* Now not far distant, as it was held fifty days after the passover. Verse 7. These feasts gave him a desirable opportunity of preaching to his brethren according to the flesh—the Jews—who assembled in great numbers from all parts on these occasions. He had also contributions for the poor saints, and hastened to forward them.

17. *Called the elders]* In the original, “the presbyters of the church.” They are also called “overseers;” Greek, *bishops*, verse 28; “from which it is evident that the words *presbyter* and *bishop* at first denoted

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

20 *And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you,* but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,

21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 And now behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me.

the same thing, namely, the appointed pastors or ministers of the church; and it was probably only these stated pastors of the Ephesian church who assembled at Miletus. If so, we may infer that a bishop, in the common acceptation of the term, was not officiating there at that time, and that it was not until subsequently that Timothy was appointed bishop of Ephesus."—HOLDEN.

18. *After what manner I have been with you]* How I have conducted myself among you.

19. *Serving the Lord]* "Discharging the ministry of the Lord with all humility and modesty." *Temptations]* Trials, perplexing obstacles. *By the lying in wait of the Jews]* (See verse 3; Acts xiii, 45–50; xvii, 5–13.)

20. *Kept back nothing]* Although exposed to dangers on this account. *From house to house]* Not only in the synagogues and public places, but in *private houses*, and in small assemblies; he had undoubtedly also instructed their several families, passing from house to house.

21. *Testifying]* Preaching; urging the fundamentals of the gospel—alike necessary for Jew and Gentile—repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

22. *Bound in the spirit]* He felt deeply impressed that it was his duty, was under a strong influence of the divine Spirit that it was necessary for him at this time to go to Jerusalem.

23. *Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth]* The Spirit testifies, reveals to me. What faith! what confidence in God! He felt it his duty to go to Jerusalem, with no revelation of what would transpire save a general assurance from the Spirit that *in every city* bonds and afflic-

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

25 And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all *men*,

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock

tions awaited him. *Bonds]* Imprisonments, chains. *Abide me]* Are waiting for me; significant of his constant exposure.

24. *None of these things move me]* I make no account of them; they cannot deter me from my course. *Neither count I my life dear unto myself]* I do not estimate my life of such importance as to swerve from duty to save it; I am willing to surrender it for Christ's sake, and for the gospel. *Finish my course with joy]* Complete my ministry with a clear conscience, and with the divine approbation. And thus, at the expense of his life, did the glorious apostle finish his ministry, shouting, in his final hours, "I have finished my course." 2 Tim. iv, 7. *To testify]* To solemnly bear witness to, and preach.

25. *And now behold, I know]* If St. Paul, as it is generally thought, came again into these parts, after his release from his first imprisonment at Rome, the meaning may be, either that it was *then* his firm persuasion and belief that he should see them no more, or that he should not see *all* the presbyters so assembled together. But it is not certain that he ever did see any of them again, even if he visited that part of Asia. That he did revisit these parts, though not Miletus or Ephesus, seems probable from Phil. i, 25-27; Philemon 22; Heb. xiii, 19, 23; although in all these quotations he speaks uncertainly of the prospect of such a visit.

26. *I take you to record]* I declare or testify to you; I call you to witness; I appeal to yourselves. *That I am pure from the blood of all men]* That is, I have so faithfully preached the word, that if any perish, the blame must rest upon themselves, for I am not at fault; I have done my duty.

27. *I have not shunned, &c.]* I have not avoided, or failed to preach or proclaim the whole Christian doctrine, called the *counsel of God*, because the whole plan of human salvation was formed in the divine mind and counsels. Luke vii, 30; 2 Cor. iv, 2; Eph. i, 11.

28. *Take heed therefore unto yourselves]* Watch over your own conduct, and the doctrines you preach, that you follow my example, and

over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

preach the same truth. *To all the flock]* The church; all the believers in your several charges. *Made you overseers]* Greek, *appointed you bishops*. The term, as we have seen, (verse 17,) is used in reference to the same persons who are styled presbyters or elders: so that the argument for an *order* in the ministry superior to the elder meets here with a fatal Scriptural objection, as in other places in the New Testament; since the terms presbyter and bishop are used<sup>are</sup> interchangeably. There can be no doubt that early in the history of the church some one of the elders, noted for his experience and judgment, was appointed to preside in the ecclesiastical conventions; and an *office*, not an *order*, for convenience, or out of respect to certain persons or churches, came to be known as distinguished from, and exercising a kind of superintendency over, the elders and their churches. The term *overseer*, as denoting a general watch-care and supervision of the flock of Christ, is peculiarly appropriate to the pastor. The office of elder is represented by the apostle as eminently sacred. These persons were called to it, not merely by the judgment of the church, but by the *Holy Ghost*. *To feed the church of God]* To give them spiritual instruction—the sincere milk of the word, and the nourishing meat of gospel doctrines. “It has been disputed whether the true reading be, ‘the church of Christ,’ and not ‘the church of God;’ but this last is established by sufficient evidence. From this verse, therefore, we may infer the personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost who appointed them overseers to the flock, and that Jesus Christ, who shed his blood for the purchase of his church, is God.”—HOLDEN. *Purchased with his own blood]* “Made his own by purchase.” By shedding his most precious blood, he obtained their relief from the penalty of the broken law, and thus made them his servants. “For we are bought *with a price*, and therefore should glorify God in our body and in our spirit which are his.” 1 Cor. vi, 20; 1 Peter i, 18, 19; ii, 24.

29. *After my departing]* Referring probably to his death, or to his long absence; and his prophetic assurance was but too truly fulfilled. This is given as an especial reason why the overseers should be faithful in watching over and superintending their flocks. *Grievous wolves]* False teachers, whose rapacious and violent tempers rendered the wolf a good representative of their characters. Matt. vii, 15.

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

*Not sparing the flock]* Not satisfied with misleading the shepherds, they will heartlessly fleece, and scatter even the flocks. The spirit of the true pastor is tender and gentle toward the flock; of the false, harsh and mercenary, seeking not their *good*, but their *gold*.

30. *Also of your own selves]* The practiced and enlightened eye of the apostle discerned among them the elements of division and heresy. The seeds of Judaism had already been scattered, and were beginning to vegetate. Rev. ii, 2. Hymenius, Alexander, and Philetus, who taught false doctrines, were probably Ephesians, or dwelt at Ephesus. 1 Tim. i, 20; 2 Tim. ii, 18.

31. *Therefore watch]* Mark the first approaches of these things. Be always ready to meet them. *And remember, &c.]* Preserve in your minds my doctrines, counsels, and, particularly, my example of faithfulness. *By the space of three years]* About three years, as the apostle does not intend to speak with arithmetical exactness. Two years he had taught in the school of Tyrannus; three months he had taught in the synagogue; and he previously taught privately in the house of Aquila and Priscilla—altogether *about* three years. *Warn every one night and day]* Continually, assiduously. *With tears]* How commendable this spirit!

32. *And to the word of his grace]* To the doctrines of the gospel, as their rule of faith and life, which would be sufficient to support, preserve, and build them up. *Able to build you up]* To edify and nourish; to advance in holiness. The figure is beautifully expressive, that of the construction of an edifice; by a continual increase of knowledge and grace, received through the gospel of Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost in the heart of man is built up by the divine Constructor. *And to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified]* That is, if the gospel is fully received and obeyed, it will build up the ruins which sin has made of the divine image in the soul, and will bring it, having thus fitted and prepared the soul for the presence and enjoyment of God, to an everlasting inheritance with all that are thus purified—with all true Christians. 1 Cor. i, 2; Heb. x, 10. This verse may also be rendered, “I command you to God, and the word of his grace, even to him who is able,” &c.

33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

35 I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him.

38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

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33. *I have coveted no man's silver, &c.]* He had not sought to enrich himself by the gospel. Had not desired—eagerly sought after, &c. In this he had distinguished himself from the course of false teachers who would teach for mercenary ends—for silver and gold. Paul had worked with his own hands to prevent such a scandal from resting upon the gospel. *Or apparel]* Handsome clothing, elegant garments, were considered among the Hebrews as a part of their wealth. "It might have been supposed that he had received these as presents, especially as Ephesus was famous for the manufacture of both plain and embroidered stuffs and household furniture. And we may infer from 1 Cor. xi, 21, that the teachers were paid partly in goods."

34. *These hands have ministered]* That is, by the labor of his hands he had supported himself and assisted his friends. Acts xviii, 3. Probably holding up his hands before him in affectionate earnestness.

35. *All things]* "All things which relate to the duty of supporting the weak; or, rather, I have completely showed you how that so laboring (as I have done) ye ought to support the weak; that is, the poor and afflicted, and the weak in faith." Rom. xiv, 1, 21; xv, 1; 1 Cor. viii, 9, 11, 12; Eph. iv, 28. *It is more blessed to give than to receive]* This is one of the sayings of the blessed Redeemer which was not recorded by the evangelists, of which there were, doubtless, many others circulating from mouth to mouth among the early Christians; the fact that the above was the language of Christ is amply attested by the assertion of the inspired apostle Paul. It is attended with a great blessing. It makes one much happier to give, &c. (See John xxi, 25.) Every benevolent heart has felt the truth of the above sentiment.

37. *And fell on Paul's neck]* According to the oriental custom, still practiced in the East.

## CHAPTER XXI.

1. Paul sails for Jerusalem. 3. Stops at Tyre. 8. At Cesarea with Philip the evangelist and his four daughters. 10. Agabus the prophet foretells the arrest of Paul. 12. Paul entreated in vain not to go up to Jerusalem. 17. Reaches Jerusalem, and visits James and the elders. 24. By the elders' advice he enters the temple to fulfill a vow; a tumult ensues, and he is only saved from death by the interposition of the captain of the guard, who carries him to the castle.

**A**ND it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the *day* following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:

2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed unto Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who

1. *Coos]* One of the largest of several small islands called the Sporades, off the coast of Carea. *Rhodes]* A noted island of antiquity, in a south-eastern direction from Coos. It was originally an independent state, and held in subjection the adjoining parts of the continent. It ultimately fell into the hands of the Romans, and finally, after various fortunes, became a prey to the Turks, from whom it was recovered by the Knights of St. John, of Jerusalem, who held it until 1522, when, after the loss of ninety thousand men, the Turks regained it, and the knights retired to Malta. Rhodes was noted for its fine climate and excellent wines; and its inhabitants for their commercial enterprises. But the most notable object in Rhodes was the brazen Colossus, which bestrode the harbor of the city of Rhodes. It was esteemed one of the seven wonders of the world, admitting the largest ships of the times to sail between its legs. It was reckoned to contain seven hundred and twenty thousand pounds of brass, was one hundred and five feet high, and all its limbs in the proper proportion, so that few persons could clasp around its thumb. It was twelve years in construction. It stood fifty-six years, and then was thrown down by an earthquake. A Christian church was established here at a very early date. *Patara]* A seaport on the south-western coast of Lycia.

2. *Phenicia]* The north-west part of Palestine.

3. *Cyprus]* (See Acts xiii, 4.) *And sailed unto Syria]* The name applied to the whole country of which Phenicia and Palestine formed a part. *Tyre]* The chief town and seaport of Phenicia.

4. *Finding disciples]* Christians. *Said to Paul through the Spirit*

said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed, and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till *we were* out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

7 And when we had finished *our* course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Cesarea; and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and abode with him.

*that he should not go up to Jerusalem]* The sense is, not that the Spirit signified through these Christians that he *should not* go to Jerusalem; for then it would have been in disobedience of a divine direction for him to have continued his journey. But the Spirit reveals to the brethren that peril would be incurred if he went, and counseled him, if he valued his safety, not to go; or, in other words, they attested, through the Spirit, that he would incur *danger* if he went. The Spirit revealed the fact of Paul's peril, and they advised him not to go.

5. *Had accomplished]* Had completed the days of the ship's stay. Verse 4. *They all brought us on our way, with wives and children]* With their wives and children. This was an eastern form of respect and affection. With their families they accompanied Paul and his companions through the city to the sea-side. *Kneeled—and prayed]* This was a *Christian* separation. How affecting and sublime the scene!

7. *Ptolemais]* A seaport on the coast of Palestine, south of Tyre, called, in the Old Testament, Accho, Judges i, 31; afterward Ptolemais, in honor of the Egyptian king, by whom it was rebuilt and strengthened. It was called by the crusaders, Acre, or St. Jean d'Acre, from its being defended against the Saracens by the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. It was the scene of a bloody conflict between Bonaparte and its Turkish defenders.

8. *Came unto Cesarea]* Cesarea of Palestine, still further south upon the coast. Acts viii, 40. *Philip the evangelist—one of the seven]* Philip the preacher, who was one of the seven deacons chosen to attend to the distribution of the charitable funds. Acts vi, 3, 5. He had labored in different places; was the instrument of the eunuch's con-

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

10 And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

version; and seems to have located in Cesarea. (Compare Acts viii, 5, 26, 40.)

9. *Four daughters—which did prophesy]* Endowed with a faculty of teaching or preaching, under a divine inspiration; perhaps, also, of foretelling future events.

10. *Agabus]* (See Acts xi, 28.)

11. *Took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands]* In this, following the custom of the Old Testament prophets, who used significant external signs or symbols, to impress the mind more vividly with the truths they communicated. (See Jer. xiii, 1; xxvii, 2; 1 Kings xxii, 11; Ezek. iv, 1-13.) *Thus saith the Holy Ghost]* Thus does the Spirit testify to me. This had been revealed to him. *Gentiles]* Romans; into whose hands he came through the malice of the Jews. Acts xxv, 11, 12.

12. *We, and they of that place]* The companions of Paul, and the brethren of Cesarea.

13. *What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart?]* That is, why by your tears do you seek to break my resolution, to destroy my fortitude, when it is my duty to go up to this feast? *For I am ready]* The prophecy had not in the least disturbed him, not so much even as their tears. He feared neither *bonds* nor death, in Christ's time, and for Christ's sake. These things he expected. Acts xx, 22, 23; ix, 16.

14. *The will of the Lord be done]* "May that which is for his glory take place." Thus they submit to the divine Providence with prayerful resignation, as the Christian should ever do.

15. *Took up our carriages]* Not conveyances, but things to be con-

16 There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Cesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

18 And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James: and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

20 And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying,

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veyed; rather, got all things ready for the journey; packed up their baggage and traveling utensils. (See 1 Sam. xvii, 22.)

16. *And brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus]* There is probably an inversion of the original in the translation of this passage, as they would hardly be supposed to bring on their way the host with whom they lodged in Jerusalem. Bishop Patrick proposes the following emendation:—"There went with us certain of the disciples of Cesarea, bringing us to one Mnason of Cyprus, with whom we were to lodge." He was an old disciple, having probably at a very early day embraced the gospel of Christ, and resided in Jerusalem, having left Cyprus, his native place.

18. *Unto James]* The Less, son of Alpheus, and bishop of Jerusalem. (Compare Acts xii, 2; xv, 13.) Peter and John seem to have been absent. *Elders were present]* (See Acts xv, 4.) Being assembled to hear the report of Paul.

20. *Glorified the Lord]* Presented praises to God. *How many thousands]* Literally, "how many myriads—tens of thousands;" intimating the vast number of converts among the Jews, even in Palestine. *They are all zealous of the law]* Strongly attached to the ceremonial law, although they were believers in Christ. Many of them contended that this law was still binding upon all; and that the Gentiles must submit to it before they became acknowledged disciples. Here originated the Judaizing teachers who caused so much injury among the Gentile churches.

21. *That thou teachest, &c.]* Evidently an untrue report, although there might have been a plausible foundation for it. Paul had uniformly taught that all Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, were liberated from the obligations of the ceremonial law, and its efficacy as a ground of justification or a means of sanctification; but he never

That they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs.

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges

had forbidden the Jews from following their own predilections in reference to themselves. He himself conformed in every proper way to the prejudices of his Jewish brethren. He behaved as a Jew (1 Cor. ix; 20) to gain them. He solemnized the feasts, attending them at Jerusalem, (Acts xviii, 21) as at the present time; circumcised Timothy out of respect to the same views; and now complied with their customs in reference to the law of vows. *Walk after the customs]* Follow religious practices.

22. *What is it therefore?*] What is it, therefore, best to do? *The multitude must needs come together]* That is, the multitude of Jewish Christians, now in Jerusalem, hearing of your arrival, will eagerly come to hear about this matter, whether true or false; they will flock together upon the first annunciation of your coming.

23. *Do therefore]* Rather a request than a command. *We have four men which have a vow on them]* Probably a vow of Nazariteship. It appears to have been customary among the Jews to make vows unto the Lord upon extraordinary occasions, and the vow of the *Nazarite* was commonly chosen. This was a voluntary vow, by which the subjects devoted themselves peculiarly to the service of God, spending at least thirty days in extraordinary devotions. They abstained from wine; let their hair grow; gave themselves up to prayer, until they offered the sacrifice upon their release from the vow. At this time they presented an oblation of some value to the Lord, their hair was shorn by the priest, and put into the fire under the altar. (See Num. vi.)

24. *Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges]* We are informed by Josephus, and other Jewish writers, that it was considered an act of commendable piety, even when bound by no vow, to practice the abstemious habits of the Nazarites with those who had undertaken a vow, and to bear the whole, or a part of the expenses of the concluding sacrifices. Paul was, therefore, requested, in order to show that as a Jew he did not consider it sinful, although unimportant, still to conform to the precepts of the ceremonial law, to purify himself, to follow the ceremonial direction of those under the vow, and *be at charges with them*, be at the expense of their sacrifices.

with them, that they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but *that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.*

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.*

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them, entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews, which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him.

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help. This is the man that teacheth all *men* everywhere against the people, and the law,

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These appear to have been poor men unable to purchase the necessary offerings, and waiting for some one to relieve them from their vow, by meeting the expense. The charges of these four persons would be the price of eight lambs, four rams, together with oil, flour, &c. (See Num. vi, 14, 15.) *That they may shave their heads]* This could not be done until the offering was made; this signifying their release from the vow. *And all may know, &c.]* That it may be evident that the report is untrue, that the stories amount to nothing, and thus, as a Jew, you still conform to the requirements of the law, and keep its precepts.

25. *As touching]* Concerning. *We have written]* (See Acts xv, 20, &c.)

26. *To signify the-accomplishment]* He went into the temple to give information to the priests how long before the vows would be ended, and the sacrifices offered, (see Num. vi,) that due preparations might be made. The period appears to have been a week, that Paul bore the vow with them, they having been under its obligations for some time previous.

27. *The Jews which were of Asia]* Of proconsular Asia, where Paul had labored so extensively, and was so well known. These Jews had come up to the feast; they had become peculiarly imbibed against Paul by his success in obtaining converts, and by their frequent collisions. *Stirred up]* Roused, excited.

28. *Help]* Come to our aid in apprehending this person. *This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people]* Prejudiced the Gentiles against the Jewish nation. A most malicious slander; for they themselves had roused the Gentiles against Paul and the

and this place: and further, brought Greeks also into the temple; and hath polluted this holy place.

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city, Trophimus, an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul and drew him out of the temple. And forthwith the doors were shut.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar;

32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them. And when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

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disciples of Christ; thus reiterating the reports that had been previously sent to Jerusalem concerning him. *And the law]* The law of Moses. Paul had manifested the utmost respect for this, teaching it everywhere—*first of all in the synagogues.* *And this place]* The temple and its services. *Brought Greeks also into the temple]* He with his companions were in the court of the Israelites; and no Gentile was permitted to enter here. On the column separating the two courts were inscriptions in Greek and Latin forbidding foreigners to enter into the sanctuary; the penalty was death. Their presence was considered a pollution. They had seen Trophimus, an Ephesian, with Paul in the city; and they imagined, or affected to believe, that Paul had brought him into the holy place out of disrespect. Nothing could have incensed the Jews more than this charge. They were too anxious to find some cause against him to examine very closely the truth of the accusation.

30. *Drew him out of the temple]* Probably intending to kill him; and seeking to avoid polluting the sanctuary with blood. *And—the doors were shut]* This may have been done by the priests and Levites to free themselves from any responsibility in the violence of the multitude, or to avoid pollution, or to prevent the apostle's rushing back into the temple, and claiming the protection of the sanctuary. The Jews, regarding it as a sacred spot, would not kill a person there. I Kings i, 50, 51; ii, 28–31.

31. *Went about]* Sought means, made preparations. *Chief captain of the band]* This officer appears to have been the tribune who held the chief military command in the city; such an officer, with a large detachment, being stationed in Jerusalem, and near the temple, to overawe the inflamed multitude, and allay their strifes, especially at the time of the feasts.

33 Then the chief captain came near and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains: and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne of the soldiers, for the violence of the people.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

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33. *Bound with two chains]* Thinking he might be a violent man, and also to satisfy the Jews that he should not escape.

34. *To be carried into the castle]* The castle of Antonia, where the Roman garrison was stationed. It overlooked the temple, and was connected with it by a private entrance, over a flight of stairs, into the portico.

35. *Upon the stairs]* Of the castle. *Borne of the soldiers]* Lifted upon their shoulders, so as to be defended from the impetuous attacks of the Jews.

37. *Canst thou speak Greek?]* Claudius Lysias, who was the tribune, was not a Roman, as appears by his name, and what he afterward says of himself. Acts xxii, 25. He was a Greek, and was surprised to be addressed in his native language by one whom he supposed to be a Jew or an Egyptian.

38. *Art not thou that Egyptian?]* Josephus gives an account of this affair, which transpired about two years before the time of Paul's arrest. He was an Egyptian Jew, and came into Judea, giving out that he was a prophet. He collected thirty thousand deluded people around his standard in the desert, and persuaded them to follow him to the Mount of Olives, where they should see the walls of Jerusalem fall down at his command, so that they might easily enter and take the city. Felix, the Roman governor at this time, marched out against them, and easily routed the undisciplined band: four hundred were killed, and two hundred taken prisoners; but the impostor escaped. As he was still alive, Lysias supposed he had again entered the city, and raised the commotion in the temple. *That were murderers?]* Assassins, banditti. The impostor's company may have

39 But Paul said, I am a man *which am* a Jew of Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee suffer me to speak unto the people.

40 And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto *them* in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

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been largely composed of such characters, as they were, in these terrible times, very prevalent in the mountains and deserts round Jerusalem.

39. *Tarsus]* (See Acts ix, 11, 30; xi, 25.)

40. *Spake—in the Hebrew tongue]* What was then called Hebrew. The Syro-Chaldee language, then spoken by the Jews of Palestine.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

1. Paul's defense upon the castle stairs. 22. His address interrupted by the enraged multitude. 24. He is carried into the castle, and would have been scourged had he not claimed his privilege as a Roman citizen.

MEN, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defense *which I make now unto you.*

2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,) 3 I am verily a man *which am* a Jew, born in Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel,

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1. *My defense]* Against the charges that had been made—that he had spoken against the Jewish nation, the law of Moses, and the temple. He proceeds to show that his early education, and life since, had been in strict conformity to the law; and then relates the circumstances attending his conversion to Christianity.

2. *Spake in the Hebrew tongue]* (See Acts xxi, 40.) As Paul had spent most of his time out of Palestine, and as his accusers were Hellenistic Jews, they may have supposed that he also was a Hellenist. This language the Jews held in contempt, while they were exceedingly attached to their own vernacular Hebrew; therefore, when they heard Paul speak in their native tongue, they were agreeably surprised, and gave him greater attention.

3. *Brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel]* In the Jewish schools the pupils sat upon mats or low stools, while the master sat upon an elevated seat above them. The expression is equivalent to that we employ when we say, he was educated *under* Gamaliel. (See

*and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.*

4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders; from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

Acts v, 34.) *Taught according to the perfect manner]* He was brought under the most rigid discipline, and taught the strictest constructions of the Mosaic law, and of the traditions of the fathers. *And was zealous toward God]* That is, the law of God as he then understood it. He was zealous in his attention to the requirements of the law and traditions, as of divine appointment, and in their defense, as they were who now accused him of speaking against them.

4. *I persecuted this way unto the death]* The followers of this religion. As far as I could, I persecuted even to death.

5. *As also the high priest doth bear me witness]* The high priest who bore the office at that time, and who was still living; but seems not at the present time to have exercised the office. Acts xxiii, 2. He would confirm Paul's testimony. *And all the estate of the elders]* All the members of the Sanhedrim, from which council he received his warrants against the Christians. *Unto the brethren]* The Jews in Damascus.

6-11. *And it came to pass]* (See notes on Acts ix, 3-17.)

12. *A devout man according to the law]* A pious man, and faithful in his observance of the law of Moses, although a believer in Christ.

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men, of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to

This description of Ananias was calculated to win the attention of the Jews.

14. *Hath chosen thee]* Hath appointed thee. *Thou shouldest know his will]* In reference to Jesus Christ and the gospel plan of salvation. *And see that Just One]* The Messiah, who appeared to Paul when he fell to the earth, and probably at other times by special revelation. 1 Cor. ix, 1. The sense may also be—to understand his character, to know him, to see him as the true Saviour.

15. *Thou shalt be his witness]* Testify what he had seen, as confirmatory of the resurrection and divine mission of Christ. *Unto all]* Both Jews and Gentiles.

16. *Why tarriest thou?*] Why delay, as thou art already convinced? *Be baptized, and wash away thy sins]* Be baptized, and in this way make a profession of thy faith in the gospel, and, in obedience to the command of Christ, receive this sacrament as significant of that inward purification of the Spirit, by which thy sins are washed away. It is probable that, in the proper attention to this ordinance, ordinarily God gave to the early believers their first sense of pardon, and a spiritual assurance of their adoption into the heavenly family, as the gift of tongues, &c. Mr. Wesley remarks,—“Baptism, administered to real penitents, is both a means and a seal of pardon. Nor did God ordinarily, in the primitive church, bestow this on any unless through this means.”

“A believer in Christ when receiving baptism, may justly be said, in a figure, to be washing away his sins, as he is by that ordinance, showing externally what has been commenced in his soul, and is manifesting his serious purpose, through divine influences, perpetually to cultivate holiness of heart.”—RIPLEY. *Calling on the name of the Lord]* Invoking or praying to the Lord Jesus, significant of his belief in his Messiahship and his faith in the merits of his redemption. Jesus, therefore, must be God, as it is not lawful to invoke any other being in worship but God.

17. *Come again]* When I returned to Jerusalem. This occurred

Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned, and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,

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some three years after his departure for Damascus. Acts ix, 26. *While I prayed in the temple]* Showing that, after his conversion, he still preserved a regard for the temple and its services, contrary to the slanderous reports of his enemies. *I was in a trance]* An ecstasy, a state of bodily insensibility, but the mind preserving its activity.

18. *Saw him]* Jesus Christ. Saw him with *his mind, in* his vision. *Get thee quickly out of Jerusalem]* The reason why he had left Jerusalem—a divine command, accompanied with intimation that his testimony would be rejected there, and himself subjected to dangers and snares.

19, 20. *And I said]* The meaning of this, and the next verse, seems to be—that as the Jews know how I persecuted the followers of Jesus, they will probably listen to my preaching, when they see that the evidence of the gospel, and the miracles I have witnessed, were strong enough to conquer my former inveterate hostility to it.

21. *Depart]* Thus was he definitely sent by divine commission to the Gentiles.

22. *And they gave him audience unto this word]* Up to this moment, the deference and respect he manifested to the law, and the nation of the Jews, and the great interest of his relation, held their attention; but when he came to allude to the scope of the gospel, as embracing alike Jews and Gentiles, and to inform them that God had sent him away from Jerusalem on account of their unbelief and malice to the unsanctified Gentiles, their anger was aroused to the highest pitch, and a storm of tumult immediately arises.

23. *Cast off their clothes]* As was their custom; as they had done in the case of Stephen, (Acts vii, 58,) and in order that their arms might

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

26 When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest; for this man is a Roman.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free-born*.

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be unencumbered to stone him, and expressive of their abhorrence and anger. *Threw dust into the air*] Still further to exhibit their rage and disgust at him and his doctrines, and as an incentive to tumult. From this comes the expression in reference to persons exciting a tumult, *kicking up a dust*.

24. *Brought into the castle*] He was now on the stairs, and to save his life, and assuage the tumult, the officer orders him into the castle. Acts xxi, 40. *That he should be examined by scourging*] The tribune not understanding the Hebrew language, could neither comprehend the accusation of the Jews nor the defense of Paul; but judged, from the confusion and rage that the Jews exhibited, that Paul must have been guilty of some extraordinary provocation or crime; he therefore determined, according to the practice of the Romans toward their slaves and foreigners, to extort a confession from him, of his guilt, by scourging. This was the examination by scourging. It was not permitted, however, to practice this upon a Roman citizen. This was directly contrary to the law. Acts xvi, 38.

25. *As they bound him with thongs*] Tied him with leather straps, preparatory to fastening him to a low pillar, and bending his back over to be scourged.

26. *When the centurion*] Who had charge of the business, the captain of a hundred men.

28. *With a great sum obtained I this freedom*] It appears that the freedom of the city of Rome, and the rights and immunities of a Roman citizen, were often sold to foreigners, particularly under the reign of Claudius. *Paul said, But I was free-born*] As Tarsus was not a Roman colony, in which all the inhabitants were born to this right, it is probable that some of Paul's ancestors had been rewarded with the freedom of the city for some meritorious service rendered the Romans. (See Acts xvi, 37.)

29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

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29. *They—which should have examined him]* The soldiers that were about to torture him. *Because he had bound him]* This being an offense against a Roman citizen, which was most severely punished.

30. *Commanded the chief priests and all their council]* Summoned the Sanhedrim, the superior council of the nation. For it was due to both Paul and the Jews that an examination should take place, and also for the purpose of justice, as he supposed him guilty of some offense. *Brought Paul down]* From the castle to the semi-circular room in the temple, where the assembly met. *Set him before them]* Brought him to their bar for trial.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

1. Paul's defense before the council. 6. Division between the Pharisees and Sadducees. 10. On account of the great tumult, Paul is removed again to the castle. 11. A heavenly vision appears to Paul. 12. A conspiracy formed against him. 16. Discovered by his sister's son. 23. Paul sent to Cesarea to Felix, the governor.

AND Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

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1. *Earnestly beholding]* With all the self-possession and commanding dignity of conscious innocence, and, perhaps, to recognize any who may have been members of the council when he received commissions from that body to prosecute the Christian believers. *I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day]* Meaning no more than that he had been perfectly conscientious in his course both before and since his becoming a disciple of Christ. He had been, from a conscientious conviction, a zealous Jew, and a student of the law, scrupulously exact in his obedience; and from the same conscientious, although blinded and sinful zeal, as he himself confessed, (1 Cor. xv, 9; Gal. i, 13; 1 Tim. i, 13, 15,) he had persecuted the

2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him, to smite him on the mouth.

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou* whited

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church of Christ, and now he follows the enlightened convictions of his heart, in his present belief in Jesus.

2. *And the high priest Ananias]* We learn from Josephus that Ananias was high priest in the reign of Claudius, during the famine mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Acts; and St. Paul, who visited Jerusalem at this time, must have known it. But, soon after this, Ananias was deposed by the Roman governor, and sent a prisoner to Rome, in consequence of difficulties arising between the Jews and Samaritans, in which he was involved. He was afterward released from imprisonment, and returned to Jerusalem, but was never reinstated in the office of high priest. From this period he could not properly be called high priest, though the title might have still been applied by way of courtesy. Jonathan was raised to the office in his place. After his death, and the high priesthood of Ishmael, who was invested with the office by Agrippa, there was an interval when the office was vacant. It was during this interval that St. Paul reached Jerusalem, and was apprehended; the Sanhedrim being destitute of a president, Ananias may have undertaken, on his own authority, or by invitation, the discharge of the office at this time. It is possible, therefore, that St. Paul, who had been only a few days in Jerusalem, might be ignorant that Ananias, who had been dispossessed of the priesthood, had taken upon himself a trust to which he was not entitled; he might, therefore, very naturally exclaim, "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest." Admitting him, on the other hand, to have been acquainted with the fact, the expression may be considered as an indirect reproof, and a tacit refusal to recognize usurped authority. He was, according to Josephus, an ambitious, cruel, and avaricious man. *To smite him on the mouth]* His anger being roused at the apostle's confident assertion of his innocence, thus directly contradicting the accusations against him, and his conscientious belief in Jesus as the true Messiah, implied in his language.

3. *God shall smite thee]* Either an expression of deep indignation at the illegal and insolent course of Ananias toward one whose trial was proceeding, and who had not been condemned, he also being the judge; or the language may be considered as a prophetic intimation of the coming judgments of God. "God is about to smite thee." This was fulfilled about six years after, in a sedition raised by his own son and certain Jewish assassins. He was drawn out from

wall : for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law ?

4 And they that stood by, said, Revilest thou God's high priest ?

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest : for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees,

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an old aqueduct, where he had concealed himself to evade their search, and was put to death. *Thou whitened wall*] Thou hypocrite ! Like to the Jewish sepulchres, white-washed without, but rotten within. A common proverbial expression among the Jews. Matt. xxiii, 27. *Contrary to the law ?*] To the spirit of the law, which enjoined a fair trial for the accused, Lev. xix, 15 ; and that charges should be sustained by witnesses, (Deut. xix, 15,) none of whom had yet been examined. It was a most undignified, base, and insulting command, which St. Paul may have resented with too much warmth.

4. *Revilest thou*] Dost thou reproach or abuse ? *God's high priest ?*] The high priest of God, sacred from his appointment and office.

5. *Then said Paul, I wist not*] Either, I was not aware, I did not know that he was now exercising this office ; or it may mean, I did not consider ; I did not bear in mind or reflect when I spoke ; thus frankly acknowledging his haste and undue feeling in the previous expression, as if he had said, "I did not reflect that Ananias was exercising the office of high priest, or I should not have spoken so sharply to him ; for it is written, 'Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.' " Exod. xxii, 28.

6. *When Paul perceived*] Either by his former acquaintance with them ; or it may mean, when he bethought himself, when he called to mind the fact that the members of the Sanhedrim were divided in their religious views, some of them Pharisees and others Sadducees. The reasons why Paul started this religious discussion are thus suggested by Mr. Barnes :—“ 1. He saw that it was impossible to expect justice at their hands ; and he, therefore, regarded it as prudent and proper to consult his safety. He saw, from the conduct of Ananias, and from the spirit manifested, (verse 4,) that they, like the other Jews, had prejudged the case, and were driven on by blind rage and fury. 2. His object was to show his innocence to the chief captain. To ascertain that, was the purpose for which he had been arraigned. Yet that, perhaps, could be most directly and satisfactorily shown by bringing out, as he knew he could do, the real spirit which actuated the whole council, as a spirit of party-strife, contention, and persecution. Knowing, therefore, how sensitive they were on the subject

and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes *that were* of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

of the resurrection, he seems to have resolved to do what he could *not* have done had they been disposed to hear him according to the rules of justice, to abandon the *direct* argument for his defense, and to enlist a large part, perhaps a majority of the council, in his favor." *I am a Pharisee*] He had been, in the fullest sense of the word, and was still, as far as the opinions of the Pharisees differed from those of the Sadducees upon doctrinal topics. *Of the hope and resurrection of the dead*] Or rather, "of the hope of the resurrection of the dead." This was indeed true; for the great theme of the apostle was "Jesus and the resurrection;" and the chief and fundamental argument in proof of the Messiahship of Christ was the fact of his resurrection; and, in his estimation, all just hope of a resurrection of the dead rested upon the fact of the resurrection of Christ. 1 Cor. xv, 13-18.

7. *The multitude was divided*] The company of councilors were now divided in sentiment, and a long-standing controversy is awakened, during which, for a time, Paul seems forgotten; or rather, the Pharisees immediately espoused his cause.

8. *The Sadducees say*] They taught that death was an endless sleep, an entire extinction of life; that there was no spirit but God, and no future state of reward and punishment. *Confess both*] Believe and teach both. St. Paul had already mentioned (Acts xxii) that he had seen a vision.

9. *The scribes*] The learned men, the teachers. *And strove*] Contended strenuously. *We find no evil in this man*] Nothing contrary to law; his views coincide with Moses: thus giving the tribune clearly to understand that it was a question of doctrine for which Paul was tried, and that the council were themselves divided. *Let us not fight against God*] Rather than lose their argument with the Sadducees, they make great concessions to Paul; allowing the possibility that he had enjoyed this spiritual vision from God, and, if so, opposition on their part would be perilous. How much better would

10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring *him* into the castle.

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul : for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

it have been for them if they had been as ingenuous in action as they appear to have been candid in opinion !

10. *The chief captain]* Who appears to have been present at the trial.

11. *The Lord stood by him]* The Lord Jesus. *So must thou bear witness also]* To encourage and support the apostle, the Lord reveals himself in a supernatural manner to St. Paul, assuring him that as he had been permitted to bear public testimony in Jerusalem in favor of the gospel, so also he should escape the wiles of his enemies, and be permitted to enjoy his long-coveted opportunity of preaching in Rome.

12. *Bound themselves under a curse]* It appears from the Talmud that it was common for the Jews to vow and bind themselves by an oath or curse that they would not eat for a limited time, until some design which they purposed was accomplished. According to their unscriptural traditions, a private person was permitted to kill any one who had forsaken the law.

These vows, however, were far from being stringent, but could be as easily unloosed as made. Thus there is no probability that these conspirators suffered death as the consequence of Paul's escape from their hands. The Talmud, among other reasons for absolving a man from a vow or self-inflicted curse, enumerates the danger of losing life; this at once relieves him. Thus it says:—"If a man vows that he will not eat anything, wo be unto him if he eats; and wo be unto him if he does not eat! If he eats, he breaks his vow; if he does not eat, he sins against his own life. What, then, must he do? Let him go to the wise men, and they will unloose him from his vow."



15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain, that he bring him down unto you to-morrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto *him*, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain; for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

18 So he took him, and brought *him* to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto *him*, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand and went with *him* aside privately, and asked *him*, What is that thou hast to tell me?

20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee, that thou wouldest bring down Paul to-morrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly.

21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

22 So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged *him*, See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me.

23 And he called unto *him* two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Cesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;

15. *Or ever he come near]* Rather, before he come near you we are ready (prepared, resolved) to kill him.

17. *Bring this young man unto the chief captain]* Although perfectly confident that the divine promise of protection would be fulfilled, still it was his duty to use all proper precautions to defend his life. God works through human instrumentalities.

21. *For a promise from thee]* That is, for the order to be given by you for Paul to be brought down to them.

23. *To Cesarea]* On the seacoast of Palestine, thirty miles north of Joppa, where the Roman governor resided. *At the third hour of the night]* At nine o'clock in the evening, to elude the observation of the Jews. A large force was sent, as the band of conspirators was large, and multitudes would join them; and, besides, the city and adjoining country was thronged with murderers, banditti, and assassins.

24 And provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor.

25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:

26 Claudius Lysias, unto the most excellent governor Felix,  
*sendeth* greeting.

27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.

28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:

29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death, or of bonds.

30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also, to say before thee what *they had* against him. Farewell.

31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris.

32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:

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24. *And provide them beasts]* That is, one for Paul and another for his immediate guard. *Felix]* His name was Antonius Felix. He was a freed man of the emperor Claudius. "He was an unrighteous governor; a base, mercenary, and bad man."

27. *Should have been killed of them]* Rather, he was seized by the Jews, and was about to be killed by them. *Came I with an army]* With a military force. *Having understood that he was a Roman]* He here equivocates a little, in order to take credit to himself: he had not rescued Paul, because he was a Roman; but he had learned that fact afterward.

28. *And when I would have known]* "Desiring to know the crimes of which they accused him."

31. *Antipatris]* This town was between Joppa and Cesarea, on the road from Jerusalem, about forty-two miles from that city. The town was built by Herod the Great, and so named after his father Antipater.

They made a forced march; and there would be no inconsistency in saying that they did this by night, although they might not have reached Antipatris until ten or eleven o'clock in the morning, the greater part of the route being by night.

32. *They left the horsemen]* The foot soldiers—as they were now within twenty-six miles of Cesarea, and there was no further danger, and their presence might be needed at Jerusalem to quell any tumult

33 Who, when they came to Cesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

34 And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of Cilicia;

35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment-hall.

that might arise there—are sent back. *To the castle]* Of Antonia, in Jerusalem.

33. *Who]* The horsemen.

34. *Cilicia]* (See Acts xxi, 39.)

35. *In Herod's judgment-hall]* Original, "prætorium." A palace built by Herod the Great, in Cesarea, as a royal residence; afterward it became the residence of the Roman *prætor*, or governor. Paul was probably placed under guard in one of the apartments of the palace.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

1. Tertullus accuses Paul before Felix in behalf of the Jews. 10. Paul makes his defense. 24. Paul preaches before Felix and Drusilla. 27. Porcius Festus becomes governor.

AND after five days, Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.

2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and

1. *And after five days]* Probably from the time of Paul's departure from Jerusalem. *Descended]* Went down to Cesarea. *With the elders]* Members of the Sanhedrim. *With a certain orator named Tertullus]* As his name implies, he was a Roman lawyer. The Jews had no such advocates, whose special business it was to plead a cause before the judge or magistrate; but as they were now under the Roman rule, and subject to appear before its legal tribunals, they would avail themselves of the professional assistance of those who were familiar with the proceedings of the Roman court, and versed in the Latin and Greek languages. *Who informed the governor against Paul]* Presented the charge, or gave information against Paul.

2. *Began to accuse him]* That is, commenced his plea against Paul, by first flattering the vanity and attempting to conciliate the favor-

that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,

3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee, that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.

5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law:

7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,

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able regard of the governor. *Great quietness]* Public tranquillity and peace. It appears that Felix had, according to Josephus, relieved the country from hordes of robbers and banditti which had infested it, although otherwise a bad and tyrannical governor. *And that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation]* The original denotes that "many things have been happily or successfully accomplished." *By thy providence]* By thy attention and supervision. The meaning of the passage is, "Great prosperity has resulted to this nation under thy prudent administration."

3. *Always, and in all places]* "In every respect (or at all times) and in every place."

4. *Hear us of thy clemency]* Give a further exhibition of thy kindness and condescension, by listening favorably to our present request.

5. *A pestilent fellow]* Greek, a *pestilence*, a *plague*; by a bold figure, a dangerous, seditious man. *Among all the Jews throughout the world]* An exaggerated expression: for, through the Roman empire; where Paul had extensively labored, and excited the bitter ire of the Jews. Tertullus artfully insinuates that Paul had been exciting civil disturbances among the Jews against the government. *A ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes]* The captain, holding the first rank among the heretical Nazarenes—Christians were so called out of reproach, as Jesus their Master had borne the same reproach from being a resident of the despised city of Nazareth in Galilee. Luke iv, 16; Matt. ii, 23.

6. *Hath gone about]* Hath attempted. *To profane the temple]* To desecrate the temple. *Would have judged]* This was far from the truth; for without proper trial they were on the point of killing him. Acts xxi, 30, 31.

8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom, thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him.

9 And the Jews also assented, saying, That these things were so.

10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:

13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also

10. *Many years]* Probably about seven. *A judge]* A ruler and civil magistrate, and better capable of understanding Jewish usages and religious rites. Nothing can be more dignified and convincing than the speech of the apostle. He addresses the governor with great respect, but with none of the fulsome flattery of his opponent; and then lucidly opens and defends his course against the false accusations of the Jews; giving a clear and forcible account of the whole matter.

11. *But twelve days]* A part of which time he had been confined in Cesarea; thus showing that he could not have excited the tumults in Jerusalem they pretended. He had also, so far from despising the temple and its service, come up to attend its feast. (See Acts xx, 16.)

12. *Neither raising up the people]* Exciting sedition.

14. *Which they call heresy]* More correctly translated, "sect;" and it is thus translated in verse 5. Paul acknowledges himself to be of the number of the Nazarenes, but not a distinct sect from the Jews holding counter views; and, though of this class, still worshiping the God of their fathers, revering the institutions of the law, and receiving the same sacred books. He was thus, according to the Roman law, entitled to the same protection as the Jews in their religion, he having neither introduced a new religion nor new objects of worship.

15. *Have hope toward God]* Hope, consisting of desire and expectation, arising from the revelation and promise of God that there will

allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and *toward* men.

17 Now, after many years, I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult:

19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had aught against me.

20 Or else let these same *here* say, if they have found any evil-doing in me, while I stood before the council,

21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried, standing

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be a resurrection. *Which they themselves also allow*] Perhaps he refers to the persons present, his accusers, who may have been Pharisees; or he may mean, "which the greater part of the Jews believe," that is, entertain this hope.

16. *Herein do I exercise myself*] In, or on account of, this hope; for this purpose, namely, that I may be fully prepared to meet the solemn revelations and decisions of another world. *A conscience void of offense*] A clear and uncondemning conscience. The apostle affirms that in all his course he had been conscientious, and that he sought especially to meet all the requirements of God, and perform every duty toward man, as he lived in the expectation of a future world and a judgment to come.

17. *After many years*] He had been absent from Jerusalem about six years. *To bring alms to my nation, and offerings*] Here the apostle commences his answer to the charge of profaning the temple: so far from this, he had come upon a most benevolent and pious mission; having collected, by his personal influence among the Gentiles, charitable bestowments of money for the poor Christian Jews, and offerings even for the temple.

18. *Whereupon*] While engaged in these things, presenting his offerings. Acts xxi, 24-26. *Found me purified*] Performing the rite of purification, at the accomplishment of a vow, according to the Mosaic requirement; without the least disturbance, neither surrounded by a multitude, like one raising a sedition, nor profaning the temple.

20. *Any evil-doing*] Any crime, any proper cause of complaint. *While I stood before the council*] On examination before the Sanhedrim, when placed there by Lysias. Acts xxii, 30.

21. *Except it be*] As if he had said, otherwise than this, if this can be considered a fault. The apostle here speaks ironically; for, by

among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of *that way*, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.

23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister, or come unto him.

24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

the annunciation of this doctrine, the Pharisees had immediately advocated his cause, and certainly neither they, nor the people, would condemn him for this. Further, the disturbance in Jerusalem was not on his account; but the Sadducees and Pharisees had fallen into a fierce doctrinal discussion, and into a tumult themselves upon this statement of Paul; making it necessary that the civil power should interfere to save Paul, and to stop the commotion. (See Acts xxiii, 10.)

22. *Having more perfect knowledge of that way]* That religion; having become better acquainted with the views of the Christians by this lucid exposition of Paul, and perhaps by his residence in Cesarea. *He deferred them]* Put them off for the present. *I will know the uttermost of your matter]* I will take cognizance of the matter at issue between you, enter fully into its examination.

23. *He commanded a centurion, &c.]* He was probably relieved, in a measure, from personal restraint, though still at times, at least, he seems to have borne chains, Acts xxvi, 29; but he was permitted to go to and fro under the guard of a military officer, and to receive and enjoy the society of his friends.

24. *Drusilla, which was a Jewess]* She was the daughter of Herod Agrippa, the first, (Acts xii, 23,) and sister of another Agrippa, the king who is mentioned in the succeeding chapter. She is represented as having been one of the most beautiful women of the age but far from sustaining a virtuous character. She had married Azizus, king of Emesa, who, through his love for her, submitted to the Jewish ordinance of circumcision. The licentious Felix seeing her, became enamored of her beauty, and induced her to leave her husband, and to marry him, although of a bad character, and a heathen also. According to Josephus, she herself renounced Judaism, and became an idolater, to please Felix. Bold must the apostle have been to have reasoned upon "righteousness, tempe-

25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix's

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rance, and judgment to come," before such a pair. The discourse must have been applied with pungent emphasis by conscience while Paul spoke. No wonder Felix trembled; and Drusilla certainly had reason to tremble, if she did not. Her heart may have been hardened, having sinned against greater light and privileges.

25. *Reasoned of righteousness]* The principles and claims of justice. *Temperance]* A government of the appetites; constancy, chastity. *And judgment to come]* Not in this world, but in the future, and, therefore, more fearful. Before that judgment-seat, how would the lives of this guilty pair appear! *Go thy way]* His conscience could not bear the presence of this good man; neither could its pangs be quieted save by a deceptive promise to give these matters another hearing. How often is the Holy Spirit driven from the heart by such a *felt*, if not expressed request! When will thy time come? When we are ready, will God be ready to hear our cry for mercy? What claim have we upon him for such undeserved forbearance? It is not at our convenience, but to-day, that God demands the heart. Say not, Go thy way; when I have a *convenient season*, I will call for thee. *That time* never comes to the sinful heart. How many have been lost who have waited in vain for this convenient season! Reader, if you have not before, come now to the Saviour, lest procrastination be your ruin, as it has sealed the destiny of thousands of others!

26. *He hoped also that money should have been given him, &c.]* How base was his heart! He knew that Paul had been intrusted with money and offerings for the poor Christians in Jerusalem, verse 17; that he was a leader, and highly esteemed, in what had now become a large sect; and he hoped, perhaps, that these Christians, from their great liberality and love for Paul, would offer him considerable sums as bribes to release Paul. He may have insinuated this to Paul; but how his pure and magnanimous soul must have spurned such a mean and unholy idea as this!

27. *After two years]* How irksome to the burning zeal of Paul must this long confinement have been had he not been firmly convinced that all things worked together for his good, and that he was glorifying his Master best then, in the order of his own providence, to suffer

room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

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rather than to *do his will!* *Willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound]* It was common for the governors to seek to obtain the goodwill of the people at the close of their administration by granting them some desirable boon; usually they released the public prisoners; but here it was a greater *favor to leave Paul bound*. He hoped to mollify the resentment of the Jews against him for his tyrannical acts and base character; but in vain: for in spite of his cruelty to Paul, the Jews sent their complaints after him to Rome, and he was only saved by the importunity of his brother, who was high in the favor of the emperor; but he had no further public employment. Thus is the expectation of the wicked often cut off. Who would not prefer the place of Paul in prison to Felix the governor? “The way of the transgressor is hard,” but “mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.”

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## CHAPTER XXV.

2. The high priest and the chief of the Jews accuse Paul before Festus.  
8. Paul answers for himself. 11. He appeals to Cæsar. 14. Festus speaks of Paul's case to King Agrippa, and desires him to examine the accusations against him.

NOW when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Cesarea to Jerusalem.

2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,

3 And desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

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1. *Was come into the province]* Into the province of Judea, of which he had been appointed governor. *Ascended from Cesarea to Jerusalem]* Cesarea was the usual place of residence for the Roman governors; but the new incumbent of the office, out of compliment to the Jews, and to become familiar with the character of their government and religion, pays them an early visit, in their metropolis and sacred city.

2. *Informed him]* Laid a charge against Paul before him.

3. *And desired favor against him]* Either, they “desired a favor concerning him,” that is, they desired that he might be given up to them, or they “desired the favor of Festus prejudicial to the interests

4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Cesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly *thither*.

5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with *me*, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.

6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Cesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment-seat, commanded Paul to be brought.

7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove;

8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Cæsar, have I offended anything at all.

9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

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of Paul." They desired him to exhibit his favor to them by making a sacrifice of Paul.

5. *Let them—which among you are able]* The sense is, Let the persons of note and consequence, the chief men among you, go and accuse him. It could only have been the overruling and restraining power of God that induced Festus to pursue a course so considerate and commendable, desirous, as he was, of winning the good-will of the Jews. It was not a trial in Jerusalem that they so much wanted, but an opportunity to take his life.

6. *More than ten days]* In the margin, which is probably the proper reading, it is rendered, "No more than eight or ten days."

7. *And when he was come]* When Paul had been brought to the tribunal.

8. *Nor yet against Cæsar]* As much as to say that he had neither sinned against the ecclesiastical law of the Jews, nor yet against the civil law. He had not plotted against the Roman emperor or government. *Have I offended]* Have I committed any trespass.

9. *Willing to do the Jews a pleasure]* To do them a favor, to conciliate them; and, to do this, he stoops to a base act. He knew that Paul was a Roman citizen, and must be judged according to the Roman law, therefore he proposes to remove his court to Jerusalem. Nothing had been proved against him; he stood before him innocent, and he had power to release him; but to hold the good-will of the Jews, he, pretending to be at a loss about the matter, proposed to Paul to go to Jerusalem again before the council, (verse 20,) where he himself would preside.

10 Then said Paul, I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

11 For if I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar.

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go.

*10. I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged]* I now stand before the proper civil tribunal of the country, where only an accusation of sedition can be tried. Each governor in his province was the representative of the Roman emperor; and his tribunal might with propriety be called *Cæsar's*. As a Roman freeman, also, Paul had a right to be tried there.

*11. For if, &c.—I refuse not to die]* “For tried I desire to be, so that it be at a proper tribunal; and if I be found guilty of any offense which, by the Roman laws, is punished with death, I shall not decline even death.”—BLOOMFIELD. *No man may deliver me unto them]* As if he had said, But if there is no truth in their charges, no man can, as no man has a right to deliver me up to them for condemnation and punishment. The Roman law defends me. The reason of Paul’s refusal to go was, that he knew they sought opportunities to assassinate him; that no new evidence could be produced by them, and that no justice could be expected from the Jewish Sanhedrim, as he had already had proof of their malice and determination to destroy him. Besides, he had received divine intimations that he was yet to visit Rome, and witness there for Jesus. *Acts xxiii, 11.* *I appeal unto Cæsar]* This was the right of every Roman citizen to appeal, in a criminal trial, from the court of the provincial governors to the emperor, and he was then sent to Rome for his trial.

*12. Conferred with the council]* His associates in the administration of the affairs of the province, the military and civil officers, and his distinguished friends, that formed his court. *Unto Cæsar shalt thou go]* Paul did not so much appeal from a decision of Festus, as from being delivered into the hands of the Jews; but Festus was eager to find an opportunity to escape the responsibility of so perplexing a casé. If he permitted Paul to go free, as justice demanded, the Jews would be enraged; if he gave Paul into the hands of the Jews, he laid himself liable to accusation for illegal proceedings toward a Roman freeman. He at once, therefore, accedes to the appeal of Paul, as his responsibility in the matter ends; he must now go to

13. And after certain days, King Agrippa and Bernice came unto Cesarea, to salute Festus.

14. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:

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Rome, and the Jews cannot complain. All the Roman emperors at this time bore the title of Cæsar, which implied the same as emperor. Nero was Cæsar at this time, afterward the most bitter persecutor of the Christians, as well as otherwise a cruel and brutal monarch.

13. *King Agrippa and Bernice]* Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa, mentioned in Acts xii, 1, and grandson of Herod the Great. At the time of the miserable death of his father in Cesarea, he was in Rome with the emperor Claudius, where he was receiving his education. He was greatly beloved by Claudius, who would have immediately given him the provinces ruled over by his father; but was dissuaded from his intention on account of the extreme youth of Agrippa, then only seventeen, and a procurator was sent in his stead. At the end of eight years Claudius bestowed upon him the government of the provinces of Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, Batanea, Paneas, and Abilene, while the rest of his father's kingdom—Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and Peraea—was still governed by a Roman procurator. Nero, who succeeded Claudius, was also a friend of Agrippa, and added a portion of Galilee to his territory. It was for his interest to be on friendly terms with the Roman procurator of the adjoining provinces; and hence this visit to Festus, the new governor. Agrippa was much beloved by the Jewish nation, and used all his influence to assuage their civil dissensions, and to avert the impending danger that overhung them, but in vain. After the destruction of Jerusalem he retired with Bernice, his sister, to Rome, and died in that city at the advanced age of seventy years. *Bernice]* Was the sister of Agrippa and Drusilla, wife of Felix, and at a very early age became the wife of her uncle Herod, of Chalcis. Upon his death, she married the king of Pontus; but did not live with him any length of time. She was a woman of great beauty, influence, and wealth; but, like her sister, of an exceedingly questionable character. After leaving her second husband, she resided, and it is supposed criminally, with her brother Agrippa, and afterward with Titus, the Roman emperor. *To salute Festus]* To pay their respects to him.

14. *Declared Paul's cause]* That is, related the circumstances connected with his case. This was partly out of respect to Agrippa, who was a Jew, and it may have been partly to obtain his opinion

15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, desiring to have judgment against him.

16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth;

18 Against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:

19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

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concerning the religious views involved in the charge against him, as Agrippa would be likely to be familiar with them.

15. *Desiring to have judgment against him*] Desiring to have him given up for condemnation and death; the Jews had not power of themselves to administer such a sentence.

16. *Have license to answer for himself*] Have an opportunity to defend himself.

18. *Brought none accusation of such things as I supposed*] He had thought him guilty of some criminal act against the Jewish law or the Roman statutes; some atrocious crime, as his accusers were so bitter against him.

19. *Of their own superstition*] The word usually denotes the worship of demons, and, hence, vain and foolish fancies; but here it is used in a good sense, as in Acts xvii, 22, meaning, Of their own peculiar religious views, as Festus was too much of a gentleman to speak of the religion of his guest Agrippa as a superstition. *Of one Jesus, which was dead*] Being a Roman, and not long in Judea, and also an idolater, he had heard but little of Jesus Christ, and knew less of his character and doctrines. He speaks of him as of any stranger whose name may have come under his notice. Of his resurrection, Festus seems neither to have known or cared.

20. *Because I doubted of such manner of questions*] Whether they should come properly before his tribunal. "Here," observes Beza, as quoted by Bloomfield, "Festus dissembles his offense, yet *convicts himself*; for why did he not acquit an accused person, against whom nothing had been proved? For the same reason that he wished to

21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Cæsar.

22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To-morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.

25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O King Agrippa, that after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.

27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him.

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have him removed for trial to Jerusalem; namely, to *gratify the Jews.*"

21. *Hearing of Augustus]* This name also, as well as Cæsar, the Roman emperors bore; it signifying, *august*, venerable—a title of respect.

23. *Great pomp]* Great display, great splendor in attire and retinue. *Into the place of hearing]* The judgment-hall, where the trials were held; or an audience-chamber in the palace of Festus.

24. *Have dealt with me]* "Have made urgent application to me."

26. *Unto my lord]* "To my sovereign." As he could find nothing against him, he had no proper charge to send with him to Rome, to the emperor. He desires Agrippa, whose Jewish descent and education would fit him for the task, to examine him, and find out his peculiar sin against the Hebrew law, if he had committed any.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

1. Paul's defense before Agrippa. 12. Describes his conversion. 28. Agrippa greatly affected. 31. The whole company pronounce him innocent.

THEN Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself.

2 I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee, touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

3 Especially, because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews,

5 Which knew me from the beginning, (if they would testify,) that after the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee.

6 And now I stand, and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:

1. *Stretched forth the hand]* A graceful and common manner among the ancients of signifying that they were about to speak, or of commencing their speech. *Answered for himself]* Made his defense.

2. *I think myself happy]* Who can refrain from admiring the manly dignity and peculiar beauty of the commencement of this oration! The whole defense is a model of its kind. Says Dr. S. Clarke,— “We here observe the beauty and force of the most persuasive eloquence, the sincerity of the Christian, and the authority and majesty of the apostle.”

3. *Because I know thee to be expert]* Well-educated in—familiar with. This was not flattery, but the truth, as he was a Jew by birth, and had been taught the customs and doctrines of his nation by his father. *Customs and questions]* Ceremonials, and religious opinions.

5. *After the most straitest sect of our religion]* After the strictest sect, that is, the Pharisees, who were reputed to be peculiarly rigid in their attention to the law.

6. *For the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers]* “This was the promise of the Messiah, to the fulfillment of which promise all the twelve tribes hoped to attain. Acts xiii, 32, 33. But as it included the promise of a resurrection of the dead, by the means of the Messiah, as it was proved to have been fulfilled in Christ by his rising from the grave, and as Christ's rising again was the pledge

7 Unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, instantly serving *God* day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

and demonstration of our resurrection, St. Paul, in Acts xxiii, 6, says that he was called in question for the hope of the resurrection of the dead."—HOLDEN.

7. *Unto which promise]* Unto its fulfillment. *Our twelve tribes]* Signifying, figuratively, the Jewish nation, formerly consisting of twelve tribes, but scattered long before this by invasions and captivities, so that the division into tribes was nearly lost. *Instantly serving God day and night]* Zealously attending to the Mosaic ordinances, with unwearyed zeal and devotion. *For which hope's sake]* On account of teaching that this expectation of the patriarchs and prophets of the Jewish nation was fulfilled in Christ; the hope, by a figure of rhetoric, being put for the object hoped for. Christ was the hope of the nation. Paul preached that Jesus was the Christ; and for this he was now accused by the Jews.

8. *Why—thought a thing incredible]* Or, as it may be rendered, "What! is it thought ineredible that God should raise the dead?" As if he had said, while insisting upon the resurrection of Christ as proving his Messiahship, "You will not deny that God can raise the dead; why, then, is it incredible to you, or why do you doubt the well-attested resurrection of Jesus, proving him to be the Messiah?" The apostle then proceeds to show the strong personal reason for his belief in the resurrection of Jesus, and for his faith in his Messiahship. He had been a persecuting opponent, but had been convinced by surprising miracles.

9. *I verily thought with myself]* Was self-persuaded; I conceived it to be my duty; I was conscientious in my opposition to Jesus of Nazareth. *Contrary to the name of Jesus]* In opposition to the doctrines of Jesus.

10. *Many of the saints]* Of the disciples—Christians—often called saints in Scripture. Acts ix, 13. We have only the account of Stephen's death given; but undoubtedly there were others, and Stephen's was particularly mentioned, as perhaps the first, and most

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme: and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities.

12 Whereupon, as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests,

13 At mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *It is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

17 Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18 To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light,

noted. *Gave my voice against them*] Not in the Sanhedrim, for he was not a member; but exerted his influence, and assisted in procuring their death.

11. *Compelled them to blaspheme*] To revile and curse Jesus and his religion, to apostatize, and abandon Christianity. *I persecuted them even unto strange cities*] So unrelenting was his bitterness that when they fled from Jerusalem, he even followed them to foreign cities.

12-15. (See Acts ix, 1-6.)

16-18. In this account of his conversion, Paul gives a succinct detail of the events of which, in the preceding chapters, he had related the circumstances more at large. He combines the information which he received directly from the Lord Jesus, and that which he received through the instrumentality of Ananias. (See Acts ix, 15, 16.) *Of those things in which I will appear unto thee*] Meaning, either that other truths should be afterward revealed by other miraculous appearances of Christ to him, Acts xviii, 9; xxii, 18; xxiii, 11; 1 Cor. ix, 1; or it may mean, In which I shall instruct thee hereafter; that is, he was to be a witness of what he had already seen, and of what should hereafter be made known to him.

17. *Delivering thee from the people*] The Jewish people.

18. *To open their eyes*] Spiritually, so that they might perceive the truth, or to enlighten their minds. *Turn them from darkness to light*] From spiritual ignorance to the knowledge of our Lord; from the

and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

19 Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

20 But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill *me*.

22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

23 That Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

night of sin to the day of holiness. Luke i, 79; iv, 18; Col. i, 13; 2 Tim. ii, 16. *From the power of Satan]* From the dominion and victory of Satan to the liberty and obedience of the children of God, which course would secure the forgiveness of sin, and, in the end, a heavenly inheritance. *By faith that is in me]* By the same confiding faith in the redemption of Jesus Christ which I enjoy. Or the words may be properly transposed, and be considered as the language of Christ to him; reading thus: "To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that by faith which is in me (by becoming believers in me) they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them who are sanctified."

19. *Whereupon]* In consideration of this; immediately upon this. *Unto the heavenly vision]* The miraculous revelation of Jesus, and of his will concerning me.

20. *But showed first]* Made known, declared. *Do works meet for repentance]* Worthy of repentance; show by their acts the sincerity of their penitence.

22. *Saying none other things]* In becoming a Christian, he introduced no new religion, but held only, and witnessed to, the truth contained in Moses and the prophets. He preached the advent of the very Messiah whose coming they foretold, and in the very manner they prophesied.

23. *Should suffer]* (See note on Acts xvii, 3.) *That he should be the first that should rise from the dead]* First, to rise to die no more; thus giving proof of a resurrection of the body, and of his power to accomplish it. Others had risen before, but died again, as did the son of

24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely. For I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

the Shunamite, and as Jesus himself raised Lazarus; but Jesus rose for ever. *Should show light]* Light of the gospel, to both Jews and Gentiles. Often foretold by prophets. Isa. ix, 1, 2; xi, 10; xlii, 1, 6; liv, 3, &c.

24. *Thou art beside thyself]* Insane, mad. The solemn earnestness of the apostle to the Roman idolater could only be accounted for by supposing his reason affected. *Much learning]* Festus noticed the clearness of his argument, and his continued reference to books, and judged that his severe application to his studies had demented him, and diseased his brain. How unaccountable to the unconverted are the exercises of the truly pious! They are as one that mocketh; but wisdom is justified of her children. The unconverted are insane, if either; and they but begin to *come to themselves* when they say, *I will arise, and go to my Father*, and say, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight.

25. *Truth and soberness]* Not the ravings of an insane man, but rational truth and sober convictions.

26. *The king knoweth of these things]* The prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures. The life and labors, and death and resurrection, of Jesus of Nazareth—all these things, as a Jew, and a resident of Palestine, Agrippa could not but be familiar with. *This thing was not done in a corner]* The miracles and teaching of Christ transpired publicly, and were widely spread abroad; he was crucified, and arose again in the midst of Jerusalem, when the city was crowded—all the prominent events of his life, and the truths of his gospel, were generally diffused and well known, and Agrippa could not but have heard them. By his silence, and by his answer, he admits the apostle's appeal.

27. *Believest thou the prophets?]* The interruption of Festus had broken in upon the thread of his argument. Paul was referring to the testimony of the prophets; and having answered Festus's charge of madness, by an elegant and impressive turn in his discourse, he resumes his argument by interrogating King Agrippa as to his faith

28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:

31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death, or of bonds.

32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar.

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in the sacred books, and anticipates his answer. It was an appeal direct to the conscience of the king, and was exceedingly effective, as the result shows. The way was then open to present Jesus as the Messiah.

28. *Almost thou persuadest me, &c.]* Some have supposed Agrippa said this in ridicule; but it has every mark of a different spirit. Probably a momentary impression was made upon the mind of this volatile king by the impassioned manner and solemn truths of the apostle; but it was not lasting. The impression was soon effaced, and he turned thoughtlessly to his worldly luxuries and sins. "How often, alas! does the heart refuse to follow the convictions of the understanding! and how mournful to be *not quite a Christian!*"—RIPLEY.

29. *I would to God]* It is my heart's desire; I could entreat God for this; or, I now pray for this. *Except these bonds]* The fetters that bound him, or his present imprisonment. How noble! how magnanimous! He wished them to enjoy his blessed, comforting religion; but though his enemies are there, he desired none of them to share his bonds.

30. *The king rose up]* The exhortation was becoming too personal, and, perhaps, to cover the emotions that were rising in his heart by this affectionate appeal, he rises from the tribunal, signifying that enough had been said.

32. *If he had not appealed unto Cæsar]* After a prisoner had appealed to the emperor, it was entirely out of the power of the inferior magistrate to release or condemn him. It may seem unfortunate that Paul was now in this dilemma when he apparently would have been declared innocent at this time, and have been liberated; but if he had not appealed, he would probably have been again given up to the Jews, who might have destroyed him. There is a divine Providence in all these events—they all work together for good, however mysterious they appear to our human vision.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

1. Paul sails for Rome. 10. Foretells the danger of the voyage, but is not believed. 14. A tempest falls upon them. 21. They suffer shipwreck. 23. Paul's vision, and assurance of their safety. 44. All come safe to the shore.

**A**ND when it was determined, that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto *one* named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia, *one* Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

3 And the next *day* we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave *him* liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

1. *That we should sail*] From this it appears that Luke now voluntarily, and from tender regard for the apostle, accompanied him on his perilous voyage to Rome. *Into Italy*] Of which Rome was the capital city. *A centurion of Augustus' band*] The Augustan cohort or legion. A legion, bearing this title, had probably been on duty in the army then in Syria, and to the charge of a centurion of this band Paul was now committed.

2. *A ship of Adramyttium*] A vessel belonging to this seaport. Adramyttium was situated in the province of Mysia, and the ship was bound hither. *We launched*] Set sail. *Meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia*] To sail along the coast; either, this being a merchant ship, to land and receive merchandise at different ports, or to avoid strong opposing winds, or through the great fear of losing sight of land: in those days, before the invention of the mariner's compass, they crept along close to the coast, although the length of the passage was much increased thereby. The centurion embarked his prisoners on board this ship, expecting, in some of the seaports of Asia Minor, to find a vessel sailing to Italy, on board of which he might embark the prisoners; and this proved to be the case at Myra, in Lycia. *One Aristarchus*] Who was also, with Luke, an affectionate companion of Paul in his present bonds; he became his *fellow-prisoner* in Rome. Col. iv, 10.

3. *Sidon*] (See Acts xii, 20.) Now called Saide, formerly a seaport of considerable importance. *Courteously entreated Paul*] Treated him kindly, giving him every permissible liberty. *To go unto his friends to refresh himself*] He permitted him to visit his Christian acquaintances in Sidon, and to receive their kind attentions.

4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

5 And when we had sailed over the Sea of Cilicia, and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, *a city of Lycia.*

6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone:

8 And hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called, The Fair Havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

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4. *Sailed under Cyprus]* Under the lee of Cyprus, somewhat out of their course; but the bold shores of the island sheltered them from the force of a strong head wind.

5. *Sailed over the Sea of Cilicia, &c.]* That is, sailed over that portion of the Mediterranean washing the provinces of Asia Minor, lying upon the seacoast.

6. *A ship of Alexandria]* At Myra, according to their expectation, they found a vessel about to sail for Italy, an Alexandrian bark. Alexandria was a noted seaport on the north of Egypt. The ship was loaded with wheat from the fruitful grain valley of the Nile, to be sold in Rome.

7. *Come over against Cnidus]* This seaport city was situated on a promontory of the same name jutting out from the province of Caria, opposite the Island of Rhodes. *Wind not suffering us]* Being contrary, and driving them out of their regular course. *Sailed under Crete]* Instead of sailing to the north of Crete, as they designed, they were forced to sail under the lee of the southern coast of the island; first making the promontory of Salmone, at the eastern extremity of the island, and then seeking shelter, with difficulty, along the southern shore. Crete was formerly a noted island, with a hundred cities; but its inhabitants, depraved by their commercial success, had become noted for their deception. Thus quoting one of their own poets, Paul writes to Titus, the bishop of Crete: "The Cretians are always liars." Titus i, 12. The island is now called Candia, and is one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea; it is under the power of the Turks.

8. *The Fair Havens]* Doubling the promontory with difficulty, they entered a sheltered bay—then, and it is said still, bearing among the inhabitants the above title, from its shelter from the storms. *Lasea]* This is supposed to have been a town of Crete, some four miles from the coast, of which Fair Havens was the seaport.

9 Now, when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished *them*,

10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

11 Nevertheless, the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, *and there to winter; which is a haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south-west and north-west.*

13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* purpose, loosing *thence*, they sailed close by Crete.

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9. *Because the fast was now already past]* As we would express a season by saying, it was after Christmas or Michaelmas, so the Jews used the period of their feasts to express the seasons in which they transpired. The fast referred to was the great day of atonement, the annual and divinely appointed fast of the Jews. Lev. xvi, 29, 30. It was kept on the tenth of the Jewish month Tisri, about the end of our September; and sailing was now dangerous from the heavy tempests of that season.

10. *Sirs, I perceive]* Either from his acquaintance with the character of the weather after the fast, or by divine intimation. *Hurt and much damage]* Liability of injury and danger, both to the persons and freight in the ship. By a miraculous intervention their lives were saved. Acts v, 22.

11. *The master and the owner of the ship]* The pilot, and supercargo, and owner of the ship and produce. Paul seems to have advised wintering there, but was overruled by those whom experience and risk ought to have taught more wisdom; but life is usually held cheap when profit is at stake. The harbor lacked some conveniences, or was not considered so favorable a position to pass the winter in as some others, and the most of the officers and crew advised to sail for another port.

12. *Phenice]* Rather Phœnix, as the word should be rendered, which was on the south-east coast of Crete. *Lieth toward the south-west and north-west]* Such was the shape of the harbor, that there were two entrances, from the north-west and south-west.

13. *Loosing thence]* Weighing anchor, and setting sail, they crept along the shore.

14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.

15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let *her* drive.

16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat:

17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.

18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;

19 And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared,

14. *Euroclydon*] Of the same description as the furious winds or hurricane now called a Levanter—the wind blowing in all directions, a perfect tornado. The etymology of the word Euroclydon seems to be very expressive of its character—*the wave-stirring east wind*.

15. *When the ship was caught*] Rather, “when the ship was borne away” by the force of the tornado, and not able to bear up against the wind, they let *her* drive—run on before it.

16. *Running under*] Close on the lee. *Clauda*] A small island just off the south-western extremity of Crete. *To come by the boat*] They had great difficulty in securing the boat on board the ship; it had probably been towed at the stern behind them; but now, as the boat might be highly necessary in case of shipwreck, and was exposed to be broken by the waves, they, with great exertion, secured it by drawing it into the ship.

17. *They used helps, undergirding the ship*] They strengthened the ship, either by passing cables and chains around it on the outside, or, as Bloomfield supposes, by fastening strong planks or stays on the inside, to bind the frame-work together. “*They used helps, inner belting her.*” *Fall into the quicksands*] These were immense shoals or sand banks off the African coast, called in the Greek *Systes*. They feared lest they should be driven upon them. *Strake sail*] Rather, *lowered the mast*; the ancient ships having but one, which was raised when they set sail and taken down when they came to land.

18. *They lightened the ship*] By throwing out the lading.

19. *The tackling of the ship*] All the supernumerary ship furniture, cables, sails, &c.

20. *Neither sun nor stars*] Their only guides upon the sea, the mariner’s compass not having been discovered. They, therefore, did

and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

21 But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship.

23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

26 Howbeit, we must be cast upon a certain island.

27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;

28 And sounded, and found *it* twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found *it* fifteen fathoms.

29 Then fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

not know where they were, and had no means of finding out. Their situation was to them, therefore, the more fearful.

21. *After long abstinence]* With so much anxiety and danger, they had little time or inclination for eating. *To have gained]* Suffered, occasioned, or, rather, "have avoided, this injury and loss."

23. *The angel of God]* Rather, "an angel of the God," &c. *Whose I am]* Noble confidence! Paul felt that he was entirely in the hands of his heavenly Father; his interests were safe in divine hands.

24. *Thou must be brought before Cæsar]* Therefore he would certainly escape from this shipwreck. *Hath given thee all them that sail with thee]* As if he had said, "Out of his regard for thee, and thy prayers, this providential gift was bestowed;" and it was done through his instrumentality, to impress all on board with the divine character and importance of the religion that Paul preached.

27. *The fourteenth night]* Of the storm, or from their sailing from Fair Havens. *In Adria]* That is, in the Adriatic Sea, including all that portion of the Mediterranean between Greece and Italy on the north, and Africa on the south. *Drew near to some country]* To land.

28. *Twenty fathoms]* A fathom was a measure of six feet.

29. *Four anchors out of the stern]* Such was the violence of the

30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under color as though they would have cast anchors out of the fore-ship,

31 Paul said to the centurion, and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried, and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

34 Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat; for this is for your health: for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you.

35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all; and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat.

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storm, and that the head of the ship might swing round, and they be so much further from the rocks. It is said to be customary now for Egyptian mariners to drop their anchors from the stern, as was the ancient custom.

30. *The shipmen*] Sailors. *Under color*] Pretending that they needed the boat to assist them in mooring the bows of the vessel.

31. *Except these abide*] The divine promise of salvation did not prevent the necessity of their using all proper efforts to save themselves. The company was not to be saved by a miracle, but by sanctified means. The presence of the sailors was still needed on board to work the ship; and it was only by the faithful use of the means in their power, that they secured the fulfillment of the promise. We are never to presume upon divine Providence, but use all possible diligence, and all proper means, and then sweetly and confidently rely upon the promised aid of God.

32. *Cut off the ropes of the boat*] By which she was attached to the ship, and thus sent her adrift.

33. *Having taken nothing*] No regular meals; eaten little, and seldom—*little or nothing*, as we say.

34. *Some meat*] Some food. *For your health*] “Will be promotive of your safety;” give you strength to meet what is to come. *Not a hair*] Suffer no injury to your bodies or lives.

37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed *themselves* unto the sea, and loosed the rudder-bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.

41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmovable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.

37. *Two hundred threescore and sixteen]* Two hundred and seventy-six. The Alexandrian merchantmen were proverbially bulky, and fitted for carrying many passengers. Josephus speaks of a ship in which he sailed which was cast away in the Adriatic Sea with six hundred persons on board.

38. *Cast out the wheat]* Probably the ship's provisions at this time, as the lading had been thrown out before.

39. *A certain creek]* An inlet, a narrow bay. *With a shore]* Convenient for landing.

40. *Taken up]* Having weighed or lifted the anchors. *Loosed the rudder-bands]* Among the ancients, large ships appear to have had two rudders, one in the bow, and one at the stern; these appear to have been secured or fastened when at anchor, (perhaps raised up out of the water,) or in a harbor, and to have been loosed for the purpose of steering when they set sail. *Hoised up the mainsail]* There is a doubt about this sail; probably it was a kind of jib or triangular sail at the bow of the vessel.

41. *Where two seas met]* Probably a sand-bank caused by the meeting of opposite currents.

42. *The soldiers' counsel]* They were responsible for the prisoners, and held accountable for their loss; they feared that they would escape, and their own lives be the penalty. How cruel and blood-thirsty this advice, after such a scene as they had just passed through!

43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose, and commanded that they which could swim, should cast *themselves* first *into the sea*, and get to land:

44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

43. *Willing to save Paul]* From personal respect, or fearing if he should be killed they would all be lost.

44. *The rest]* Who could not swim, he ordered to save themselves on floats made of plank and portions of the wreck.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

1. They land upon the Island of Malta, and are kindly entertained by the inhabitants. 5. Paul exposed to a poisonous viper, but uninjured. 8. Heals diseased persons. 11. They depart toward Rome. 17. He calls the chief of the Jews together, and informs them of the cause of his coming. 24. Some believe. 30. Preaches in Rome two years.

**A**ND when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

2 And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

1. *Melita]* The modern name of this island is Malta; it is situated about midway in the Mediterranean, between Europe and Africa, south of the Island of Sicily.

2. *And the barbarous people]* They were chiefly Carthaginians or Phoenicians, but were then under a Roman governor. The Greeks and Romans called all other nations, speaking a different language from themselves, barbarians; so that the term here has nearly the same force as the word *foreigners* with us; although, from their pride of character, they also associated with it an idea of inferiority. St. Paul thus uses this word in 1 Cor. xiv, 11: "If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a *barbarian*; and he that speaketh shall be a *barbarian* unto me." *Showed us no little kindness]* That is, showed us special kindness—a common expression; their sympathy being the more excited by the driving rain and the bitter cold.

3. *There came a viper out of the heat]* Rather, "urged by the heat,"

4 And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

6 Howbeit, they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever, and of a bloody-flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

9 So when this was done, others also which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:

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there "came out of the heat." He had undoubtedly been hidden, perhaps torpid, in the bundle of sticks, and the fire revived and drove him out. It appears to have been a very poisonous serpent.

4. *Venomous beast*] The word beast is usually applied to the larger animals; but the original word is applicable to *wild* animals of any species. *Yet vengeance suffereth not to live*] They knew he was a prisoner by his guards or bonds; and they supposed he had received a fatal wound from the viper. By *vengeance*, they meant the divine justice, or malediction with which the barbarians believed their gods always pursued heinous criminals.

6. *Swollen, or fallen down dead*] The symptoms and result of a poisonous bite. *They changed their minds, and said that he was a god*] Knowing the universal effect of the viper's bite, and seeing that Paul was entirely unharmed, they immediately concluded that he must be a supernatural being, having a different nature from the race of men.

7. *Were possessions*] The estates—the property. *Of the chief man*] The principal or most influential person; probably, however, the word here refers to his office as Roman prefect. *Lodged us three days courteously*] Received them as guests, and most hospitably entertained them.

8. *Lay sick*] Of fever and dysentery; a most dangerous situation. *To whom Paul entered in*] Into whose sick room he entered; came into his presence. *And prayed*] For the divine power to heal. *And laid his hands on him*] According to his custom; the Spirit using this outward symbol as the sign of his powerful descent upon a person. *Mark xvi, 18. And healed him*] Instrumentally, through divine aid.

10 Who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they laded *us* with such things as were necessary.

11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

12 An*I* anding at Syracuse, we tarried *there* three days.

13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli:

14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they

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10. *Honored us with many honors]* Bestowed upon us the most respectful attentions; or honors here may mean gifts—bestowed many generous gifts. *Such things as were necessary]* They had made them presents before, now they loaded them with provisions for their voyage.

11. *Whose sign was Castor and Pollux]* The ancients were accustomed to have images of deities upon the prows and poops of their ships, and the ships were known by the name of these gods; they were also considered the especial patrons of the ship and crew. Castor and Pollux were, according to their mythology, the twin sons of Jupiter, and were considered the peculiar patrons of mariners; it was very common, therefore, for vessels to choose them as their sign, or mark of distinction and recognition.

12. *Syracuse]* On the southern part of the Island of Sicily—a noted city of antiquity.

13. *Fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium]* Not sailing directly, as probably the wind was contrary, but by a long tack outward, they were enabled at length to run into the port of Rhegium, in Italy. This town was near the south-western extremity of Italy; now called Reggio. *Puteoli]* Passing through the Sicilian Straits with a fair wind, they sailed to the above port. This was the usual port for the landing of cargoes from the east, and was well known to the Jews who debarked here when they came to Rome; many of whom resided here. It was noted for its mineral and hot baths.

14. *We found brethren]* Christians. *Tarry with them seven days]* “It is probable that they had arrived there the day after the Lord’s day. Hence, they were requested to stay the *next* Lord’s day over, to give an opportunity to *all* the Christians of hearing Paul’s preaching.”—BLOOMFIELD.

15. *When the brethren heard of us]* The brethren of the church at Rome, having heard by letter or messenger. That church had pro-

came to meet us as far as Appii-forum, and The Three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself, with a soldier that kept him.

17 And it came to pass, that after three days, Paul called the chief of the Jews together. And when they were come together, he said unto them, Men *and* brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans:

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bably been founded by the “strangers from Rome,” who were present at the Pentecost, and were converted at that time. Acts ii, 5. *Came—as far as Appii-forum]* A distance of fifty-one miles from Rome; showing their great respect for the apostle Paul. It was a small town, situated upon the celebrated Appian way—a paved way leading from Rome to the city of Brundusium, a distance of three hundred and fifty miles. It received its name from its situation. *The Three Taverns]* Another small village; receiving its name from its being a common stopping place for those journeying to and from Rome, and provided with refreshment houses. It was about thirty-three miles from Rome. Two companies came out, one as far as Appii-forum, the other to the Three Taverns. *Thanked God, and took courage]* How consoling this Christian visit must have been! It called forth his thankfulness to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. *And took courage]* From this evidence of the kindness he should receive from the Roman Church, and of an overruling and gracious Providence.

16. *The centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard]* The prefect of the emperor’s guards, into whose custody all prisoners sent to Rome were delivered. *But Paul was suffered to dwell by himself]* The other prisoners were placed in the camp, or barracks; but, perhaps through the testimony of Julius, the centurion who came with Paul, and also the letters of Festus and Agrippa, Paul was permitted to dwell by himself under the guard of a single soldier, to whom he was probably chained. (See verse 20.)

17. *Paul called the chief of the Jews]* The principal Jews of Rome, of whom there were a large number in the city. Being sent to Rome on an accusation brought against him by his own nation, he called them to him to explain the circumstances, and to prevent their prejudice and opposition against him, his cause, and his gospel labors while in Rome. *Delivered prisoner—into the hands of the*

18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let *me* go, because there was no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against *it*, I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had aught to accuse my nation of.

20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you*, and to speak with *you*: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee.

22 But we desire to hear of thee, what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging: to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

*Romans]* That is, they had, by their tumult and accusations, occasioned his coming before the Roman tribunal. Acts xxi, 27-33.

19. *Not that I had aught to accuse my nation of]* He had not come bringing a charge, but merely to defend himself—"Not intending thereby to accuse my nation."

20. *For the hope of Israel]* The Messiah, long desired and expected. Acts xxvi, 6, 7.

21. *Any of the brethren that came]* Jewish brethren.

22. *What thou thinkest]* What are thy peculiar religious views as a Christian; and what are thy sentiments of the Christian sect. They did not regard his being a Christian as an evil deed, or prejudicial to his character as a Jew, but delicately hint that they should be glad to hear what he could say in defense of Christianity, as the sect was generally in bad repute, and had been accused of holding great errors, probably by the Jews of Jerusalem, and of the cities of Asia Minor.

23. *He expounded and testified]* Rather, explained and earnestly taught the kingdom of God; that is, the gospel dispensation; endeavoring to convince them of the things relating to Jesus, both by appealing to the testimony of the law of Moses and to the prophetic scriptures. *Concerning Jesus]* His claims to be the Messiah.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive.

27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.

29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things

25. *Had spoken one word*] It may be rendered, "They departed, Paul saying (*this*) one thing, Well spake," &c. *Well spake the Holy Ghost*] (See this passage from Isaiah fully expounded in Longking's Notes, vol. iv, p. 46.)

28. *The salvation of God*] The gospel of salvation through Jesus, proceeding from God. *They will hear it*] Will hearken to it, receive and believe it.

30. *Two whole years*] Which, together with his imprisonment under Felix, his voyage, and other detentions, would swell the period of his bonds to about five years; and yet how patient, how sweetly and happily submissive! *Own hired house*] Literally, *home, place, lodgings*, as he probably did not hire a whole house.

31. *Preaching, &c.]* The apostle, although a prisoner, was busy in his appropriate office—preaching the gospel, and expounding the character, office, and doctrine of Christ. During this period he wrote many of his apostolic letters to the churches, which are still sources of instruction and comfort to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ. Mr. Barnes gives the following chronology of the epistles written from Rome:—

Ephesians, April, A. D. . . . .	61
Second Timothy, May, A. D. . . . .	61
Philippians, before the end of . . . . .	62
Colossians . . . . .	62
Philemon . . . . .	62
Hebrews, spring of . . . . .	63

which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

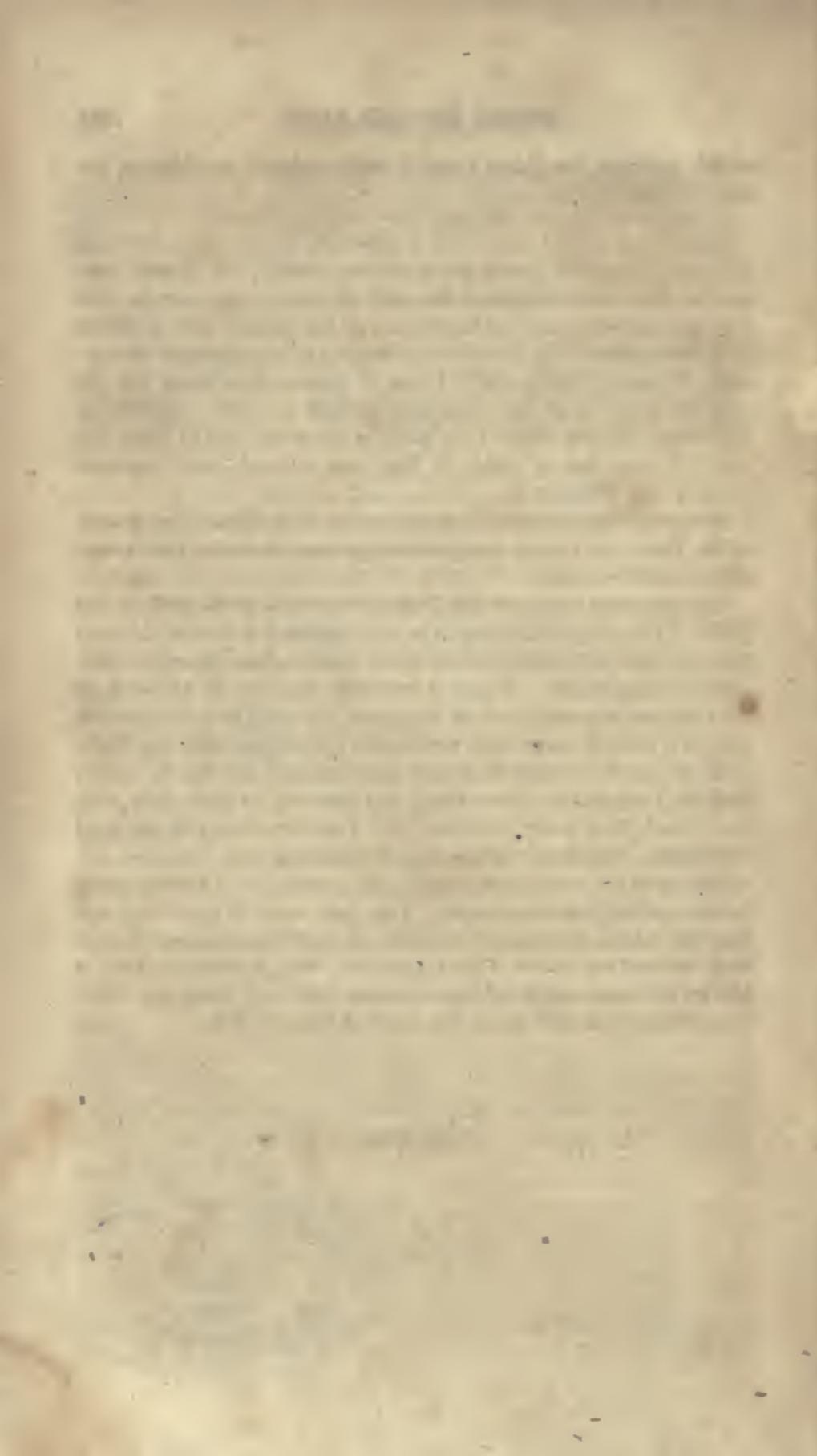
Paul was successful, even while imprisoned, in winning many souls to Christ, even from among the luxurious court of the Roman empire, so that his confinement was not in vain; and even in this respect it turned out to the furtherance of the gospel. Phil. i, 12-14. *With all confidence]* In its truth, and fearless of consequences to himself. *No man forbidding him]* "Hence it appears that there was no edict of Nero, or of any preceding Roman emperor, against the Christians, till that which took place in the tenth year of Nero, the year following that in which St. Paul was released from imprisonment."—DR. WHITBY.

Here ends the evangelist Luke's account of the labors and travels of St. Paul; his history was probably written soon after Paul's confinement of two years.

It is generally supposed that Paul was released at the end of this period, by the imperial order, as no one appeared to accuse him, and that he again revisited the scenes of his former labors, preaching with extraordinary success. There is but little certainty in reference to the time and circumstances of his death. It is the common opinion that, in a general persecution against the Christians, excited by Nero, A. D. 64, upon the false accusation that they had set fire to Rome, both St. Paul and St. Peter sealed the sincerity of their faith with their blood, Paul being beheaded, and Peter crucified with his head downward. His holy courage and unwavering faith remained unshaken until his martyrdom; and in the prospect of a terrible death he was enabled thus to triumph: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." 2 Tim. iv, 6-8.

THE END.











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